



*Newton Centre
Task Force*

NEWTON CENTRE

Final Report

July 2008

This document was largely prepared by volunteer members of the Newton Centre Task Force. Staff from the City's Planning and Development Department helped to facilitate the group process and provided technical support to the entire task force as well as Group 1 and Group 2/3. The Final Report was a long-time in the making and includes several parts, as follows:

- Executive Summary
- Group One: Report to the Newton Centre Task Force
 - Appendix A: Consensus Plan
 - Appendix B: Unsprawl Case Study, Newton Centre, MA
- Combined Group Two and Three Report:
"Toward the Revitalization of Newton Centre" – June 16, 2008
 - Appendices – January 15, 2008
 - Item A – Housing
 - Item B – Zoning with Proposed Overlay Zone Map
 - Item C – Parking and Traffic with attachments
 - Item D – Public Sector Guidelines
 - Item E – Private Sector Guidelines
 - Item F – Sustainability
 - Item G – Other Documents
 - Commercial Gross Floor Area
 - Height of Existing Buildings
 - Business Improvement Districts (BID)
 - 40-R "Smart Growth" Districts
 - 40-Q District Improvement Financing (DIF)
 - 40-S Educational Funding for "Smart Growth"
 - Overview – District Improvement Financing
 - Sudbury Aqueduct
 - Letter from All Newton Music School
 - Growth in Massachusetts Moving Forward
 - Walkability – Metropolitan Areas
 - Town Centers

July 7, 2008

The Honorable David B. Cohen, Mayor
City Hall
Newton, Massachusetts

Dear Mayor Cohen:

I am pleased to submit the final report of the Newton Centre Task Force. It represents several years of effort by dozens of volunteers who, through their hard work, keen insight and eloquent expression, have demonstrated why Newton is such a special community. The fact that you have chosen to hire four of them away from us only serves to reinforce this point.

What you are receiving are the recommendations of the Task Force. In accordance with the agreements reached part way through the process, there are two different visions. That of Group One is certainly less ambitious than that of the combined efforts of Group Two and Three. Nevertheless, both take a positive and pro-active approach to the urban planning process as it relates to Newton Centre.

These recommendations are supported by hundreds of pages of research and analysis which are in the possession of the Planning Department and represent an important resource in their own right.

In addition the many volunteers, I also want to thank the many members of your administration who provided support, expertise and advice throughout this process. Without their help, this work could not have been completed.

People did not always agree. They did not always disagree agreeably. But the passion with which these difficult issues were engaged is a reflection of how important they are to the Citizens of Newton. I hope that their efforts will receive the consideration that an effort of this magnitude deserves.

Very truly yours,

Charles S. Eisenberg, Chairman
The Newton Centre Task Force

NEWTON CENTRE TASK FORCE REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Before the 1950s, Newton Centre was a vibrant and diverse commercial center. There were places to buy fresh food and produce, like Sage's and Blacker Brothers. There were places to hang out and meet friends. There was even a movie theatre like there is in West Newton. People lived in the Centre, in apartments over the retail stores. And the stately Victorian architecture of the Mason School in the center of the Centre tied the area together both visually and physically. Newton Centre was a place to live, a place to shop and a place to go.

Today, Newton Centre is a very different place. Where the Mason School stood there is a surface parking lot. The retail mix is dominated by banks and beauty salons while many of the more neighborhood-oriented uses have disappeared. The pedestrian environment is decidedly unfriendly and multifamily housing has all but disappeared. One hundred years ago, Newton Centre was the epitome of what is now called Smart Growth and Sustainable Development. Today, many people feel that there is no "there" there.

After two years of studying these issues, in February, 2005 the Newton Economic Development Commission presented Mayor David Cohen with "The Newton Centre Renaissance Report." The report stated that:

"Today, Newton Centre is a ... location for regional banks and selected high-end stores, but lacks the hub, cohesion and pedestrian focus of a true village center. It lacks any central focus: what was once the site of the Mason school was turned into the central triangle parking lot many years ago. There are few residences in the Centre's core and... few pedestrian links to surrounding ...residential properties. The village under serves local residents and lacks the star power to attract new visitors...what once had been a cohesive village has turned into a scattered, single shop destination, regionally-oriented business center." and concluded that "The time has come for a renaissance of Newton Centre...to initiate a restructuring and rebuilding of the business area of Newton Centre into a vibrant destination and village center."

Amongst a series of substantive recommendations, the Report urged the establishment of an ad hoc committee to review the Report, to study Newton Centre and to make recommendations to the City on a plan to improve and revitalize Newton Centre.

In response to the Report, in April, 2005 Mayor Cohen established the Newton Centre Task Force and charged it to:

- Develop viable options to address the commercial, residential, cultural and transportation needs of Newton Centre.
- Analyze and critique such options in relation to:
 - The delineation of proposed project boundaries
 - Increasing commercial vitality and the commercial tax base in the Centre

- Addressing Newton's housing gap, with additional consideration to senior and affordable units
- Meeting cultural needs in the City of Newton
- Conducting cost/benefit analysis of each option

The original Task Force consisted of twenty members and five alternates representing all the stakeholders in Newton Centre. They were: Charles Eisenberg (Chairman), Jerry Adams, Warren Brown, Raymond Ciccolo, Alderman Victoria Danberg, Kevin Dutt, John Furst, Robert Gifford, Andrew Gottlieb, Jennifer Grams, Vicky Greenstein, William Hagar, Candace Havens, Amanda Heller, Ann Hochberg, Todd Krasnow, Marianne Paley Nadel, Fran Seasholes, Jane Shoplick, David Stein, Andrew Stern, David Zussman, Eve Tapper, Terry Wendt, and Elizabeth Wilkerson.

After an initial meeting, the Task Force was divided into subcommittees to study different areas of interest: design standards, parking demand and traffic flow, zoning regulations, financing alternatives, historic and current uses and case studies of efforts in other communities. For seven months, these subcommittees collected and analyzed information, traveled as far as Illinois and Maryland to conduct research, and solicited the opinions of stakeholders and experts. This effort culminated in a public hearing in late 2005 where each subcommittee (along with the Newton Historical Society) presented its report. At the same time, two surveys were conducted by the Task Force; one of local commercial establishments and one of residents. These reports and a summary of the surveys can found on the City's website at www.ci.newton.ma.us/newtoncentretaskforce/initial-findings.htm

The next step was to hold a series of visioning sessions. Using part of a dedicated \$40,000 grant from the Commonwealth, the City hired Dodson Associates to facilitate this effort and the first session was held on March 26, 2006. At this half-day exercise, the task force was divided into four groups, each of which was given a map of Newton Centre, trace paper and "building blocks." At the end of the session, each group presented its "vision."

The second meeting, to be held on April 5th, was planned as an open exercise so that interested citizens could participate in the visioning process. It was attended by a large number of people, many of who rejected the premise of the Task Force and/or the legitimacy of the process. A subsequent session failed to resolve these differences.

Therefore, in May, 2006, the Chairman proposed and the Task Force agreed to alter the structure and approach of the Task Force effort. Three groups were established representing those who felt no or little change was needed (Group 1), those who believed in "moderate" changes (Group 2), and those who believed that major changes were required (Group 3). Each group was open to any interested Newton citizen or merchant who signed prior to July 1, 2006. It was agreed that each Group would be allowed to prepare its own report and recommendations that would be included in the final Task Force report without substantive alteration.

Between July and December, 2006, these Groups met frequently to develop their plans. During that time, Group Two and Group Three decided to unite and Ron Jonash, the original chairman of Group 1, led an effort to establish areas of consensus between all three groups.

In January, 2007 a meeting was held to update the public. Reports were presented by Group 1 and Group 2/3. In addition, a “Consensus Plan” was presented which primarily focused on changes to the central triangle parking lot. There was also a separate report presented showing the results of several parking and traffic studies undertaken by the Task Force. Since that time, the various Groups have been working on the details of their plans and to prepare their reports.

In the eighteen months since that meeting, the “consensus” has broken down. In part, this was a function of the determination that assumptions concerning the ability to replace parking in the triangle with on street spaces are not feasible. However, a more significant factor was the recognition that critical disagreements could not be reconciled. Therefore, while both Group 1 and Group 2/3 have incorporated elements of the “Consensus Plan” into their reports, there is no consensus between the two groups.

Finally, it is important to note that one charge to each Group has been to present plans that are at least revenue neutral; if not positive.

The Group 1 Report

Group 1 characterizes their approach as “Better, not Bigger.” Group 1 believes in moderate, incremental, sustainable, long-term improvement consistent with village needs and on an appropriate village scale. They believe that Newton Centre is already a smart growth location. They are concerned that any inappropriate development will result in an unacceptable increase in traffic and parking demand. Therefore, Group 1 recommends that the scale and character of Newton Centre be preserved, but that the Centre be improved by implementing a comprehensive pedestrian safety plan along with automobile traffic improvements placed in the context of a beautification program focused on landscaping, under-grounding of utilities, beautifying streets and sidewalks, better signage and lighting, and improved maintenance of all of the above.

To this end, Group 1 recommends the following actions:

1. Enhance the triangle parking area
2. Improve the pedestrian experience
3. Implement traffic calming measures
4. Implement a landscaping and beautification plan
5. Employ a comprehensive parking management plan
6. Establish design guidelines that emphasize historic preservation and conservation

7. Support modest growth within the existing zoning by-laws (no zoning overlay)
8. Encourage the creation of a modest amount of additional housing within the existing height limits, particularly the re-conversion of upper floors and houses to their original residential use

The members of Group 1 were: Carol Birkestrand, John Furst, Lisa Gordon, William Hagar, Amanda Heller, Nancy Honig, Ron Jonash, Adam Maleson, Ruth Neiberg, Alderman Ken Parker, David Putnam, Steve Seiler, Neal Solomon, Polly Sullivan, Gregg Tong, and Carolyn Wong.

The Group 2/3 Report

When the Task Force established multiple planning Groups in July, 2006, there were three. Some months later, Groups Two and Three decided to see if they could agree on a common vision and set of recommendations. This proved more difficult than they may have anticipated, but with the assistance of Phil Herr and others, they succeeded. The Group Two/Three Report is, therefore, a compromise. It is far less ambitious than some members of Group Three would have wished and somewhat more aggressive than some members of Group Two originally were prepared to accept. However, (without in any way prejudging the general public reaction), the Group Two/Three report now represents the recommendations of the majority of Task Force members and stakeholders who chose to actively participate in this planning process.

Group 2/3 believes that the character and quality of Newton Centre has deteriorated over the past fifty years to the point where it now requires significant intervention to restore it to what it could and should be: a lively, vibrant village centre. For Group 2/3, the current Newton Centre has too much traffic, too many undistinguished, single-story buildings, too many “destination” retail locations such as banks and hair salons and too few apartments. And at the center of it all is a barren, lifeless parking lot that discourages pedestrian access, is visually depressing and serves to divide rather than unify Newton Centre.

“Combined Group Two and Three envisions a Newton Centre that will be a model of 21st century development, regaining its historic scale, charm, and character; a community that has a “heart” and a “sense of place. (We) seek to rebuild an interconnected village center with a mix of mutually reinforcing businesses, residences and community facilities.”

The members of Group 2/3 reject the notion that doing nothing is benign. On the contrary, they emphasize that, left to its own devices, the Centre has become something very different from what they and many of their fellow residents would have wanted.

“Rather than to run the risk of standing still or, alternatively, seeing the village center shaped by inappropriate development, (we) hope to guide the growth of

Newton Centre along socially desirable, economically responsible, and environmentally sustainable paths.”

They also believe that Newton needs more housing in smart growth locations; both conventional and affordable. Newton Centre is an ideal location for empty-nesters, young people (particularly those who grew up in Newton) and those who want to lead a more sustainable lifestyle. It has the services, public transportation and infrastructure to support desperately needed affordable and mixed-use developments at a scale that is not overwhelming. For Group 2/3, encouraging the development of rental and for-sale multifamily housing in Newton Centre seems like a win-win; adding life and vitality to the neighborhood while providing a much needed resource for the City.

Group 2/3 is realistic about the constraints and problems in the Centre. They understand that parking and traffic are concerns that cannot be ignored. They recognize that ways must be found to finance public improvements without increasing the City’s financial burden and they acknowledge that means must be found to mitigate the negative impacts attendant to the restoration process.

Finally, Group 2/3 notes that appropriate development in Newton Centre will generate additional net tax revenue. In the current fiscal environment, Newton cannot longer afford the luxury of ignoring this factor. While tax revenue should never be the justification for approving bad developments, it is an added reason to look favorably upon good ones. Group 2/3 believes that the plan they are proposing is not only good for Newton Centre but that it is also good for Newton; and that helping the City as a whole is a legitimate argument to make in advocating for their position.

Based upon these principles, Group 2/3 has developed a detailed plan which is summarized in the following points:

1. Transform, restore and develop the public areas in the Centre
2. Increase the housing stock by up to 150 units, providing opportunities for people of all income levels and ages.
3. Move parking to the periphery of the Centre and consider the development of at least one public garage structure
4. Improve and calm traffic flow through a series of measures
5. Increase the variety of commercial/retail uses, including efforts to attract more neighborhood-oriented and specialty businesses.
6. Improved pedestrian passageways, some lined with retail shops
7. Improve the streetscape and exterior environment by putting utilities underground, widening sidewalks, improving signage and lighting, and providing new landscaping and street furniture.
8. Establish a zoning overlay district to give property owners and developers guidance and constraints while relieving the financial burdens and uncertainty of the existing regulatory process.
9. Assure that all new development and substantial renovation follows the principles of sustainable development.

10. Mitigate the adverse impacts that new construction will inevitably place upon existing residents and commercial tenants.

Amongst the mechanisms that Group 2/3 proposes to achieve these goals are:

1. Establish a Newton Centre Advisory Commission to guide planning and development.
2. Establish a Parking Authority to finance and manage the public garage.
3. Increase the development envelope in selected locations and rationalize the parking and setback requirements to reflect the realities of a village center.
4. Provide incentives to develop housing over ground floor retail.
5. Take advantage of various Federal and State financing tools, particularly the state's Smart Growth Zoning Districts and the District Improvement Financing program.
6. Encourage business and property owners to establish a Business Improvement District to help assure that the revitalized Centre is well maintained.

The members of Group Two/Three were: Jerry Adams, Kay Alexander, Warren Brown, Alderman Victoria Danberg, Kevin Dutt, Rob Gifford, Jennifer Grams, Vicky Greenstein, Candace Havens, Ann Hochberg, Todd Krasnow, Peter Lew, Marianne Paley Nadel, Kumar Nochur, Sean Roche, Fran Seasholes, Jane Shoplick, David Stein, Andrew Stern, Maurya Sullivan, Eve Tapper, Terry Wendt, Elizabeth Wilkinson, Anatole Zuckerman and David Zussman. In addition, Representative Kay Kahn participated in the process and provided input on many issues.

Conclusion

This process has been more difficult and contentious than many of us anticipated. However, it has also been quite extraordinary. The report that follows represents the significant efforts of a large group of dedicated, enthusiastic and highly intelligent volunteers whose collective effort could probably not be duplicated in many other communities. We owe all of them our gratitude and we owe them the serious consideration of this Report by the City of Newton.

GROUP ONE: REPORT TO THE NEWTON CENTRE TASK FORCE

Newton Centre (n.): a small commercial center completely surrounded by neighborhoods.

[Y]ou don't meet other people while driving in a private car, nor often in a bus or trolley. It's on foot that you see people's faces and statures and that you meet and experience them. That is how public socializing and community enjoyment in daily life can most easily occur. And it's on foot that one can be most intimately involved with the urban environment; with stores, houses, the natural environment, and with people.

- Allan B. Jacobs "Great Streets"

PREFACE

More than two years ago when the Newton Centre Task Force (NCTF) made its findings public, the abutting community was arbitrarily presented with the proposition that the Newton Centre commercial district is ugly, outdated, and so dysfunctional that only development on an unprecedented scale can save it.

For the members of Group 1, many of whom work in established businesses in the Centre or live in homes on the neighborhood streets surrounding it, this characterization is divorced from reality. It does not describe the Village where we raise our families, where we live and work and shop.

Group 1 formed in response to the NCTF's first visioning session and public meeting a year and a half ago. Although only a few of us belonged to the group of people initially appointed to the Task Force by Mayor Cohen, we regularly attended Task Force meetings and were alarmed by what we heard.

Group 1 is made up almost entirely of local merchants and Newton Centre residents who live within one-quarter-mile radius of the Village. Largely made up of volunteers, those of us who came onboard the Task Force during its second phase, have drafted this plan as an alternative to proposals that call for heavy development within the Centre. This plan was entirely conceived, researched, and formulated by residents and local merchants with varying kinds of expertise to offer, limited time at our disposal, and with strong feelings of pride and affection for the neighborhood we call home.

INTRODUCTION

Newton Centre Village is a commercially diverse and vibrant village center with a well-established network of public open spaces, a fully developed commercial infrastructure and footprint, and a strong village history.

The term “Smart Growth” has been heard frequently at Task Force meetings as a rationale for large-scale change. But Newton Centre Village residents are already living “Smart Growth.” We live in single-family or appropriately-scaled-multi-family homes within easy walking distance of the “T” and of the Village’s businesses and restaurants, its parks and schools and its houses of worship (*Appendix B: Unsprawl Case Study: Newton Centre, Massachusetts*).

If the community as a whole is to thrive with a maximum of mutual respect and cooperation, and a minimum of friction, it is necessary to maintain a delicate balance between residential, commercial, and public properties. We reject any plan that would destroy the Village in order to save it, whether in the name of increased revenue or under the deceptive banner of “Smart Growth.” The components of our proposed plan aim to preserve the unique scale and character of Newton Centre, including both its residential and commercial areas, making the village center even more attractive and lively than we find it today.

We agree that the Consensus Plan¹ (*Appendix A: Draft Consensus Report of the Newton Centre Task Force*), which is predicated on the premise that all of the parking spaces in the central lot can be shifted and kept within the triangle area, would be the best-case scenario. In the event that this is not feasible, we have created an alternative plan that would fulfill most of the important goals of the Consensus Plan (increased open space, pedestrian pathways, screening of parked cars, benches, tables, areas to socialize, and a more attractive triangle area) while also protecting the triangle parking lot that is vital to the well-being of our retail establishments, or putting any undue pressure, or additional financial burdens on the city.

The centerpiece of this vision calls for relocating 64 parking spaces from the Triangle Parking Lot to diagonal configurations along retail frontages on Langley Road, Lyman and Center Green Street. This allows over half the capacity of the parking lot to be replaced by an attractive village green that will provide for both active and passive public uses.

The Centre is to be improved by implementing a comprehensive pedestrian safety plan along with automobile traffic improvements placed in the context of a beautification program focused on landscaping, under-grounding of

¹ **Update: Early in 2007 the Consensus Plan (CP) was presented to the public at a meeting at the Mason-Rice School. This meeting represented the culmination of hours of negotiation between the three groups making up the Newton Centre Task Force. At the time of the presentation all members of the task force had agreed to the general principles embodied in the CP. Subsequently the Group One report was completed based upon the CP. Group 1 was notified in June of 2008 that Group 2-3 had withdrawn from the CP. We have therefore appended the CP to this report.**

utilities, beautifying streets and sidewalks, better signage and lighting, and improved maintenance of all of the above.

The pedestrian experience will be enhanced by improvements such as walkways and bikeways, raised crosswalks, and “neck downs” at intersections, as well as measures to smooth and calm vehicular traffic. The result will be a safer and more convenient village center.

Newton Centre Village is among the handsomer village centers in the Garden city, blessed with commercial structures, churches, and private homes of great aesthetic value and historic significance. The Newton Centre “T” station and the First Baptist Church are landmarks designed by H. H. Richardson, architect of Boston’s Trinity Church, and the Newton Centre Playground was designed in part by Frederick Law Olmsted (and completed by his firm), originator of Boston’s “Emerald Necklace” of parks and greenways. Many houses on adjacent streets have been included in the Newton Historical Society’s annual walking tours of significant homes and have been marked by historic plaques. Our plan calls for honoring and highlighting this rich local heritage by establishing clear historic preservation and conservation design guidelines to preserve the unique and eclectic nature of the village.

These measures will result in a sparkling village center that will be a model for the other villages of Newton.

PART I



Figure 1 sketch by Mongkol Tansantisuk

TRIANGLE PARK

From the very first meeting of the Task Force and throughout its existence, attention has focused on the Triangle Parking Lot. Many members have viewed it as an ugly and inappropriate centerpiece for an otherwise attractive village. Many also consider it a waste of valuable public space. Group 1 agrees that Newton Centre could present a more welcoming face to visitors and a more coherent and appealing space for the use of residents, businesses, and their clients and customers. But we are also aware that visible, convenient parking is the lifeblood of this or any commercial area; without it, business can wither and die. And we are also mindful of our responsibility to the neighborhoods that surround the commercial Village so closely on all sides. These would become far less safe and pleasant places to live if parking and traffic were to be relocated from the commercial Centre, where it belongs, to residential streets, where it emphatically does not belong. Our plan for the Triangle takes all these interests into account.

The main Triangle (as well as the smaller adjacent Beacon Triangle) is to be reinvented as an attractive and socially active space, providing a visual identity for the Village Centre (Figure 1). The centerpiece of our plan calls

for the construction of a larger, more open and attractive multi-use village green. To make this possible, only as many parking spaces (64 by our count) are to be relocated from the Triangle lot as can be accommodated by a diagonal reconfiguration of parking spaces along adjacent commercial streets. Plans for the improved Triangle Park will be based on a formal design competition after a budget has been set and agreed to by the city.

Our plan allows for just over half the existing parking spaces (or fewer if feasible) to remain within the Triangle. We envision that the remaining land--the existing green space and the bulk of the parking lot--will be converted into a large, attractive Village Green that will provide space for a variety of public uses. Our plan calls for natural screening of the remaining parking spaces as well as landscaping and beautification improvements--gardens, benches, attractive light fixtures--along the retail frontages of Beacon Street, Centre Street, and Langley Road, and extending into nearby side streets (CP).

We envision actively expanding the mix of public uses that will make the Village and the revitalized Green an attractive meeting place both for existing village-scale events and similar activities not currently provided for. There will be open space with gardens and trees, outdoor benches and tables. Possible uses include performances on the Green, outdoor movie nights, concerts, public art fairs, as well as recreational family uses of neighborhood scale. We envision a traditional New England band shell and a few small kiosks or carts for newspapers, flowers, and other small-scale amenities.

On-grade enhancements would include:

- Landscaping and structured plantings
- Maintained/increased green space
- A strong north-south pedestrian linkage across the Triangle between Beacon Street and Langley Road

PARKING

Given the limited amount of space available in the Village center, we feel strongly that public parking should be for customers of the local stores and businesses, area residents, and those wishing to enjoy the Centre Green. Commuter parking is a separate need that must be addressed by authorities on a regional basis. The Village center cannot and should not be expected to meet that additional demand.

To accommodate local parking in a way that complements local needs, we recommend that a wide range of experimental measures be tested in the village to see which improvements are most effective. There should be clearly established goals and measurement guidelines to systematically test results and determine what works.

Under our plan, 64 of the existing 150 street-level parking spaces inside the Triangle would be replaced one for one with diagonal street parking. This would enhance general accessibility by increasing parking spaces close to various destinations in the Centre that are now underserved (CP).

One-for-one replacement parking calls for:

- Diagonal parking on Lyman Street (53 spaces)
- Diagonal parking on Center Green Street (11 spaces)

No parking structures would be needed or planned at this time to replace the 64 spaces currently in the Triangle (Figure 2). In fact the Newton Centre Task Force findings showed that Newton Centre does not have a parking space problem, but rather a parking management problem (CP). A parking management plan would provide for improved enforcement and would offer and monitor special employee permits for use in shared parking and other areas outside the Triangle. In addition we advocate that a study of “free-market” parking meters be done, and if appropriate implemented with 100% of the parking revenue returned to the village to improve services.

Gain additional employee parking by:

- Setting up a new permit system which establishes designated employee parking in the Pleasant Street, Pelham Street, and Cypress Street lots.
- Negotiating shared workday parking in various church and private lots as part of a managed parking plan.

Protect abutting/surrounding residential streets from overflow from business/commuter parking overflow:

- Allow permit parking for residential streets contiguous to the Centre if residents so desire.
- Eliminate 12-hour meters in Newton Centre.
- Ensure strict enforcement of all regulations.

Improved signage:

- Attractive and uniformly designed signs should be installed that show where the parking lots in the Centre are located (CP).
- A “parking resource” pamphlet should be made available for businesses to provide to their employees and customers and should be e-mailed to the community annually

All parking areas:

- Creative landscaping and screening of all parking areas (CP)
- Creative landscaping on all new construction (CP)
- More frequent trash pickup, street cleaning, and snow/ice removal in public parking lots and Village streets

Encourage alternative means of transportation:

- Bicycle racks (CP)

- Bicycle lanes (CP)
- Walking map of the Centre and surrounding areas (aqueduct walk to Waban/Chestnut Hill)
- Develop a comprehensive plan to encourage and protect pedestrian traffic



Figure 2 sketch by Mongkol Tansantisuk

TRAFFIC

If you want cars to drive like they are in a village, then build a village.
 -- Hans Monderman

For many years Newton had a policy of managing the streets for the benefit of cars and trucks. This worked to the detriment of pedestrian safety and enjoyment.

It is crucial that modifications be recommended for improving and calming traffic flow in the Newton Centre area without increasing through traffic and without adding to the traffic on neighborhood streets.

- Protect abutting/surrounding residential streets from overflow business/commuter parking (CP)
- Address traffic problem in Centre: rush hour traffic jams, residential street "cut through," etc.
- Better traffic management through a system of traffic calming measures. These measures would include signal changes and mid-block crossings, and pedestrian activated traffic signals

Traffic calming improvements to be further investigated include

- Improved signage (CP)
- Raised crosswalks (CP)

- Investigate posting of “residents only” access on certain streets during AM and PM rush hours
- Explore other traffic-calming devices

The City of Newton should commission a comprehensive traffic study that looks at the entire road system from Route 9 to Four Corners, the Needham Street/Centre Street axis, and Route 128 to Newton Corner including the Mass Pike. Without a comprehensive study, the traffic problem cannot be properly addressed.

PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

With its low-rise commercial structures, its popular restaurants and coffee shops, and its attractive boutiques, Newton Centre has long been a pleasant and convenient “walking village.” But increased traffic flow and lack of attention to street-level design and maintenance have eroded the pleasure, and sometimes the safety, of walking through the village.

Group 1 wants to see expanded and enhanced pedestrian walkways and crosswalks, supplemented with clear village “portals.” The proposal for a traffic roundabout at Beacon and Centre Streets to enhance safety and slow and smooth the flow of vehicular traffic deserves consideration.

Other measures to enhance the pedestrian experience include

- Better, more attractive street lighting
- Improved signage: impose more consistent parking regulations in the Centre and mark them clearly; remove multiple and confusing parking signs; provide “You Are Here” map kiosks; publish and enforce design guidelines for commercial signage (CP)
- Create a thoughtful plan to encourage foot traffic within the village (CP)
- Increase the number of crosswalks, and provide better placement to conform to actual pedestrian routes, such as mid-block crossings. Provide visual cues for drivers approaching intersections, such as bollards, raised crosswalks, and changes in paving materials amongst others (CP)
- Narrow and/or redesign the major thoroughfares of Centre and Beacon streets to include raised landscaped medians, “bump outs”/“neck downs” to make crosswalks safer (CP)
- Signal changes
- Improved design and maintenance of all public sidewalks and walkways (CP)

Landscape and Beautification

Maintain/increase green space. Give proper attention to landscaping using city, volunteer, and private business resources. Our plan calls for (CP):

- More and better-maintained trees and landscaping of green space
- Pruning and preventive care of trees and shrubs
- Regular mowing and weeding of green space
- Flowers planted/hung throughout the village
- Sidewalks maintained, repaired, and cleaned frequently
- Better and more timely snow/ice removal on all sidewalks
- Removal of all chain link fencing, which is an eyesore, to be replaced by hedges or wrought iron
- Minimization and centralization of news boxes and better maintenance of area(s) in which they are permitted
- “Welcome to Newton Centre” signs on each approach into the village

ZONING & DESIGN GUIDELINES

Owners of commercial property should be encouraged to reflect in their own buildings the improvements we envision in public spaces. The overall look and feel of the Village can be made more cohesive and attractive with the addition to private commercial property of (CP):

- Attractive lighting lamps throughout the Village
- The use of high-quality materials and complementary design
- Plantings and beautification of sidewalks
- Consistent signage: stores, walkways, parking areas, MBTA station

New building construction and renovation of existing buildings should be permitted

- Only if appropriate in character, use, and scale to the existing village
- Only after careful review to ensure such changes conform to existing zoning ordinances
- Only after consideration of any adverse impacts such as increased traffic and parking problems or demands on residential neighborhoods, public schools and other city facilities

These modest changes can be achieved with

- No zoning overlays
- No zoning and special permit changes

One major change that *is* called for is a change in attitude on the part of the city, which has allowed commercial development to proceed unevenly and arbitrarily, with little design oversight and notoriously lax follow-up or enforcement of its own ordinances, licensing and permitting requirements. Furthermore, a communication system with abutters and neighbors in a wide radius should be established.

LAND USE – ZONING

Members of the Task Force, as well as members of the public who have attended sessions and open meetings, have regretted the lack in Newton Centre of convenient village-focused businesses such as a grocery store, a book store, and hardware/home furnishing stores, as well as community meeting space. The disappearance of once popular businesses such as these is an ironic result of the success of Newton Centre, since commercial rents have risen so high that owners of small businesses can no longer afford to compete with banks and chain stores for adequate floor space.

With a concerted outreach effort the city could work to improve the mix of private uses in Newton Centre Village and provide better guidance to future development in keeping with the current character of the Village. We recommend:

- Sharpening the current special permit process with clearer guidelines on maintaining existing scale, character, density
- Reclaim public buildings for community uses such as the former branch library (a National Trust Historic Property)
- Careful consideration of barring large chain stores by ordinance

HOUSING

By suburban standards, even by the standards of many Newton neighborhoods, Newton Centre is densely settled. There are over 2,700 households with a population of nearly 8,000 people. Within a quarter-mile² radius around the Newton Centre "T" station, there are nearly 600 dwelling units at a density of 7.4 units per acre.³ (By now these numbers have increased.)

We feel that it is essential to maintain the current Village character and scale that draw residents to the neighborhood. A modest amount of additional housing can nevertheless be achieved over time by

- Encouraging the re-conversion of nonresidential space above the ground floor of commercial buildings back to residential use (where it once existed)
- Encouraging residential use above the ground floor (under the existing height limits)
- Re-zone residential properties now used as

businesses to encourage reversion to residential use—possibly adding to the stock of affordable housing



² Metropolitan Area Planning Council June 1997 report, *Newton Centre Transit-Oriented Development Case Study*, written by Kent Stasiowski and Justin Hollander.

³ Metropolitan Area Planning Council June 1997 report, *Newton Centre Transit-Oriented Development Case Study*, written by Kent Stasiowski and Justin Hollander.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Newton has a unique system in which 13 villages, each of distinct character, together make up the social fabric of the city and allow it to feel more like a small town than it actually is. Within this system Newton has no single "downtown." Instead, each neighborhood has its own center. Developing Newton Centre into a citywide or regional "downtown," as some members of the Task Force have proposed, would drastically change the village character that draws people to Newton Centre in the first place. Such changes would not be desirable.

Signs of Newton Centre's long and varied history still exist throughout the village and contribute to its unique character (CP). These include:

- Historically significant and architecturally interesting older buildings
- Newer, predominantly single-story commercial buildings
- Human, pedestrian-friendly scale and appearance

All of this contributes greatly to the identity and visual appeal of the village. Historically and aesthetically significant buildings need to be protected from destruction or inappropriate modification. The adjacent residential streets, many of them lined with homes dating from the Victorian era, need to be protected from commercial encroachment. Public education and awareness are essential. We can do this by:

- Connecting the historic greens and open spaces which already exist. These include:
 - ❖ The Newton Centre Common and Triangle
 - ❖ The historic green space in front of Piccadilly Square
 - ❖ The historic World War I Memorial Flagpole Green
 - ❖ Powderhouse Hill
 - ❖ The Aqueduct area
 - ❖ Newton Centre Playground
 - ❖ Samuel Francis Smith Memorial Park
 - ❖ Beacon Triangle
 - ❖ Union Street MBTA land
- Preserving the existing skyline and burying utilities in these areas.
- Establishing clear guidelines that will (CP):
 - ❖ Require preservation of historic buildings
 - ❖ Promote appropriate conservation, renovation, modification, rehabilitation of existing buildings
 - ❖ Make sure historic buildings are adequately protected from destruction or inappropriate modification (example: carriage house next to T stop now a taxi office).
 - ❖ Promote new construction compatible in materials, character, use, and scale to the existing village

Ways to create public awareness and promote appreciation of the historic buildings, homes, and public spaces include:

- Providing plaques on historic buildings and freestanding interpretive signs for open spaces
- Developing walking/biking tours throughout the village and for wider interconnected areas on trails throughout Newton
- Making pamphlets available at the Newton "T" Station

Newton Centre Historic Landmarks include:

- ❖ Newton Centre Railroad Station
- ❖ Sumner Street Historic District
- ❖ Trinity Church
- ❖ First Congregational Church
- ❖ Newton Centre Playground
- ❖ First Baptist Church
- ❖ Church at 10 Langley Road
- ❖ Newton Centre Branch Library
- ❖ Bradford Court Apartments
- ❖ Bray's Block
- ❖ Historic Greens (see above)

FINANCIAL

Group 1 opposes selling or leasing Newton's public spaces for private development. The improvements we have recommended are modest and can be achieved with limited public expenditure. The benefits will flow to local taxpayers--to the businesses that give Newton Centre its commercial vitality and to the residents who live in the city, patronize its businesses, and enjoy its open spaces.

Priority Financing Action Initiatives:

Secure and leverage multiple sources of financing for village improvements and beautification:

- Secure business or organizational sponsorship for selected village improvements;
- Secure grants or outside financial support that can leverage any available resources from the city, state, and federal governments
- Secure commitment from the city for 10-20% of Public Works and Parks and Recreation's capital improvements budget to fund a matching program for village-specific projects. This funding would be available to all villages.
- Further explore the use of a Business Improvement District or analogous funding or fee mechanism to finance ongoing management of the initiatives
- CPA funds for the new open space
- Meter revenue

A modest total capital investment of \$3-5 million could be raised through multiple financial sources:

- A modest incremental operating budget of \$200,000 per year could be raised through increasing parking fees. Currently Newton Centre accounts for more than half of the city's income from parking meters. Some of this should be earmarked for the maintenance of the village
- About 20% from donations from residents and merchants (\$50 per year for seven years)
- About 20% from the merchant/commercial community through possible fees, donations, employee parking program
- 20% through private/business donations, paid sponsorships, and advertising (equivalent to about \$150k per year for seven years)
- 40% through matching city (as noted above) and state grants (\$300,000 per year for seven years)

Conclusion

Our goal is to protect and improve an already thriving Newton Centre Village and to provide a model for other villages.

We should be striving for improvements that focus on a comprehensive pedestrian safety plan, traffic improvements, a beautification program focused on landscaping, under-grounding of utilities, beautifying streets and sidewalks, better signage and lighting, and improved maintenance of all of the above. Enforcement of existing ordinances and regulations is required immediately. These improvements will support the Village's signature businesses and enhance the quality of life for neighborhood residents, patrons, and merchants.

Our plan requires no significant legal or policy changes to move forward. Most of our ideas are supported in the *Newton Comprehensive Plan*⁴ approved by the Board of Aldermen in November 2007 and the *Newton Recreation and Open Space Plan*⁵. Our approach is practical and replicable in

⁴ Goal 1: To recognize, preserve and maintain the City's most important natural assets and resources. (Draft Comprehensive Plan, Open Space and Recreation, October 10, 2006, page 9-12)

[Goal] 5: Promoting the Broader Use of History in Planning & Development
Planning with and for history requires making history a useful and useable tool for all City departments, as well as all nonprofit and for-profit organizations, involved in planning and development. (Draft Comprehensive Plan, Cultural Resources, October 10, 2006, page 9-16)

⁵ Recreation and Open Space Plan
Goal 1: To recognize, preserve, and maintain the City's important natural assets and resources. (Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2003-2007, February 2003, page 65)

other villages. We require no special consideration or exemptions from the MWRA, MBTA, or the State. Our proposals are financially feasible right away and are politically viable and are supported by residents and merchants of the Village. Our suggestions can be implemented immediately and enjoyed today.

We hope the planning process of the future works closely with residents and local businesses. To that end this document should serve as a new beginning, a place to begin a discussion, inclusive of the people who live, work, and shop in our village.

For information or questions on the Group One Report please contact Lisa Gordon at 617-851-5112 or at: lisa@kdgordon.com.

APPENDIX A: CONSENSUS PLAN

The Mayor appointed the Newton Centre Task Force in April 2005. Its original 25 members and several additional participants have been working since then to produce this report. Initially, the Task Force was divided into six subcommittees: Case Studies; Design; Financing; Parking and Traffic; Property Use and Zoning. Each of these subcommittees researched background information and the existing conditions of the Centre. The Task Force used much of the information collected during this phase of the process to help shape its final recommendations. (The subcommittee reports have been included in the appendix in their entirety.)

After this initial phase of research, the Task Force expanded its membership to include interested members of the public and embarked on the second phase of the process: visioning. In this phase, the Task Force re-divided itself into three, self-selected groups to explore different visions for the future of the Centre. When each of these groups presented their plans at a public forum in October 2006, it became clear that there were several areas of agreement among the three plans. The group chairs subsequently met and the Task Force members agreed to recommend the "Improvement Plan" for Newton Centre that described below.

For any village center of neighborhood improvement to be successful, it is critical that there be some common principles upon which most, or all, key constituencies agree. These common values then become the underpinning for key strategic objectives that have sufficient broad based support to assure action and follow through on individual initiatives ranging from cleanup and garbage collection to public investment in parks and infrastructure, to guidelines for renovation and new development.

In the well-established village of Newton Centre, there may be differences of opinion on specific uses and building densities, but there is a shared vision of a vibrant village center that serves both the surrounding village neighborhood and the broader city. There is also broad-based agreement that to remain the vibrant village center it has been and is will require continued diligence by the entire community of merchants, residents, property owners and elected representatives.

In the face of increased traffic, changing shopping patterns, and changing neighborhood needs, the community will need to make sure that the Centre continues to capitalize on its easy access to public transit, its attractive setting and mix of public and private uses, its surrounding residential areas and parks, and its convenient parking and pedestrian circulation. Detailed studies of these problems and needs have been completed and there continues to be disagreement on development objectives. However, the three different subcommittees and the overall Task Force have now come together around four key Improvement Plan Objectives:

1. Reinforce the "village" heritage, scale and character.

Newton Centre has been a gathering place since the 18th century. But it has not been Newton's

- first, oldest or biggest settlement
- economic "downtown"
- seat of government

In 1714, a surveyor declared the intersection of Homer and Centre Streets to be Newton's geographic "center," so the new meeting house was built there.

For the first half of the 19th century, one source says the area was known as "Saints' Rest," because it was dominated by churches and the hilltop Newton Theological seminary.

The clear population centers (or "villages") in 1831 were Newton Corner, Watertown Street, West Newton, and Upper and Lower Falls. In 1831, there was no Beacon St. (or Chestnut Street or Walnut St.). Newton Centre still had many churches but relatively few houses. However, it had also become a stop on a new rail line, which hinted at major changes to come.

Starting in the 1880s and continuing into the early 20th century, railroad commuters remade Newton Centre. It became a week-round community, where new homes and shops - and even more churches - were clustered together within walking distance of the train station. Many of the commercial buildings and workshops were three or four stories tall - about the same height as many of the new Victorian and Queen Anne homes being built for railroad commuters.

The remaking of Newton Centre as a railroad suburb involved both market forces and conscious planning. By 1920, in addition to churches, stores, and homes, new public buildings and parks filled and surrounded the intersections of Beacon, Centre, Langley and Union Streets.



commercial buildings on Centre Street, facing the common, 1890-1905¹

In the 1920s, automobile drivers began to overtake railroad passengers in shaping the next wave of major change in Newton Centre. The Depression and World War II delayed their biggest impact until the 1950s: a 1946 aerial view of Newton Centre still looked remarkably like similar views from the 1890s.

¹ Images from the collections of the Newton History Museum, 527 Washington St., Newton, MA 02458



1897 artists view of Newton Centre

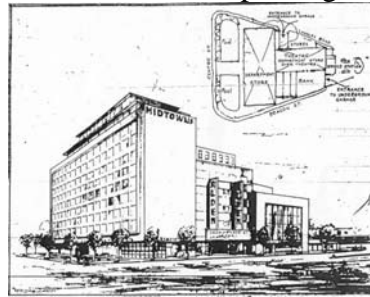


1946 aerial view of Newton Centre

By the 1950s, however, shoppers clearly preferred driving rather than walking from store to store. As older commercial buildings were replaced, the new buildings often had only one or two stories, and the merchants joined their customers in pressing for more parking spaces and lots. Parents campaigned successfully to replace the old school in the "center of the Centre" with a new, modern school "at the edge of the center," at the southern side of the Newton Centre Playground. The old school site was re-used for parking.



Mason School, built in the triangle in the 1890s



a building proposed but never built on the site of the old Mason School

In the early 21st century, Newton Centre still has layers from all these historical periods:

- in the oldest layer, churches (or at least church sites) and roads that brought people to and from church once a week in the 18th and early 19th century
- in the middle layer, a rail line, homes and commercial buildings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, clustered within walking distance of the train station to meet the needs of daily railroad commuters
- in the newest layer, commercial buildings, parking lots, and widened streets and intersections, all designed to meet the needs of automobiles and their drivers

After considerable discussion on the meaning of "village" and "community" relative to "downtown," there is now general agreement that Newton Centre is a successful village center that needs to bring the neighborhood community together and provide a diverse range of uses, activities and experiences at a pedestrian and neighborhood scale consistent with the center's heritage over the last 100 years.

2. Significantly improve the pedestrian experience throughout the centre. After significant analysis and debate about the needs and conflicts associated with vehicular, public transit, and pedestrian access, facilities, and amenities, there is now general agreement that the pedestrian experience needs to be accorded a much higher priority in future plans and improvements in the center. The key objective here is to make the entire center more pedestrian friendly and safe and to improve pedestrian connections to public transit while reducing conflicts with vehicular traffic and parking. (illustrate with photo of narrow cluttered Newton Centre sidewalks and wider sidewalks and plazas in Newton Highlands)



3. Expand and augment the open space experience in the village centre. While there are large amounts of open space near the village centre, there is also strong agreement that these spaces are not very well connected, focused or programmed. The most critical link and focus of this open space network is the Newton Centre and Beacon/Union Street Triangles in the middle of Newton Centre and all groups agreed on the objective of removing all of the parking from the Triangle and replacing it with a mix of more pedestrian-oriented active and attractive open space uses and activities.



Today the triangle is a parking lot... tomorrow, it could be open space.

4. Enhance the mix of public and private uses that make the Centre so attractive. There is widespread concern that the current dynamics of the private marketplace has resulted in the loss of a number of uses considered to be desirable to the continued vitality and diversity of the Centre (especially the loss of neighborhood retail uses and their replacement by offices and services). The key objective here is to encourage the return of residential uses above ground floor retail and to use public facilities and spaces if necessary to support produce stores, newspaper and magazine stands and similar uses to the Centre along with the special events and activities like farmer's markets, arts and craft shows, ice skating, etc.



In the context of these four objectives, the Newton Centre Task Force has agreed upon five principal improvement recommendations and an overarching recommendation on Financing and Community Involvement going forward:

Recommendation 1: Enrich the pedestrian experience of the entire village center through enhancements that will improve the streetscapes, provide better and safer connections within the Centre and to surrounding areas and interior blocks.

The Task Force is in support of a program of physical improvements that includes the installation of attractive street furniture, landscaping, and trash receptacles (with special attention given to the provision for continued maintenance), improved lighting, signage and undergrounding of utilities (especially along Langley and the north side of Beacon where no work has been done), widening and improving of sidewalk paving and raised sidewalk crossings (especially in connection with the reconfiguration of parking that is recommended below). There was strong agreement that any traffic and parking improvement plans should be integrated with these activities to ensure that pedestrian safety, mobility, and amenity remains the top priority.

Sidewalk widths, light fixtures, street furniture and landscape treatments vary greatly throughout the Centre. All of these elements contribute to the overall pedestrian experience. To improve this experience, the City should establish Design Guidelines for Public Improvements. Implementing these Guidelines will direct future public improvements, to ensure a more cohesive, attractive, pedestrian-friendly Newton Centre.

The Design Guidelines should include recommendations on the design of streets, sidewalks, open space, parking areas, and landscape as well as on the procurement and placement of street furniture, light fixtures, public signage and sidewalk materials. They should not recommend that the streetscape in the Centre should be completely uniform, but instead should propose general standards that apply to the entire Centre as well as more detailed guidelines for specific areas.

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES, to be followed throughout Newton Centre

1A. Streets and Sidewalks: *Well-designed streets and sidewalks are vital to the success of Newton Centre. While it is important to preserve ease of vehicular movement, particularly along Beacon and Centre Streets, Newton Centre is also a destination point and the heart of a residential community. It should be a place where people feel they can easily walk between businesses, parks and shops. Street and sidewalk design should support the objective of making a pedestrian oriented environment. Roads,*



particularly the wider Centre and Beacon Streets should be safe and easy to cross.

- Build neck-downs (bumped out sidewalks) at all corners of all streets lined with parking spaces to shorten the distance that pedestrians have to cross the road.
- Consolidate pedestrian crosswalks, and mark them with concrete pavers, brick, paint or other special paving. Coordinate the design of the crosswalks with the design of the sidewalks.
- Build 10'-wide raised treed medians along Centre and Beacon Streets to give pedestrians a safe halfway stopping point. Medians also indicate to drivers that they are entering a special place.



- Sidewalk widths will vary from street to street, but shall use a consistent palette of materials and design treatments. Possible paving and curbing materials include Stiles & Hart Boston City Hall paving brick, and Chelmsford Grey Granite.
- Place utilities underground throughout the Centre.



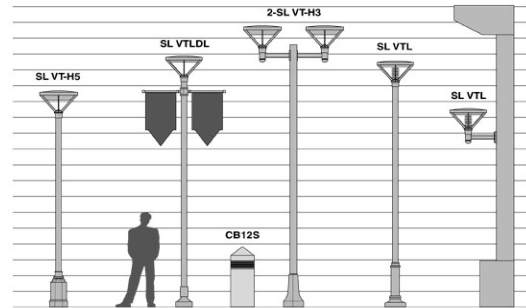
1B. Pedestrian Walkways and Alleys: *Pedestrian Walkways and alleys provide smaller scale routes for pedestrians to navigate the Centre. They should be well lit, safe, and pleasant.*

- Pedestrian walkways and alleys shall be constructed of the same palette of materials as the street sidewalks in Newton Centre. Their design shall incorporate the same light fixtures that are used throughout the Centre. Plantings and street furnishings shall be added wherever possible.
- Sidewalks and entryways shall be added behind those buildings that provide rear public access. These walks and entryways shall be constructed of the same materials as sidewalks along streets.



1C. Lighting: *In addition to providing security, decorative light fixtures help to establish the character of Newton Centre.*

- Use pedestrian-scale light fixtures 10'-14' high, of a simple design that can accommodate arms for planters and banners. Locate fixtures at regular intervals not greater than 70' apart.
- Light fixtures shall meet "Dark Sky" requirements.



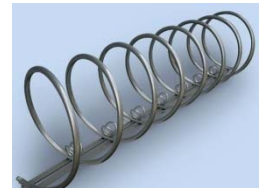
1D. Street Furnishings: *Street furnishings - benches, trash receptacles, planters, bollards, newspaper dispensers, bicycle racks, tree grates and directional signage - combine with light fixtures to define the character of a particular place. They furnish a space and invite pedestrian involvement. The style and color of all street furnishings shall be coordinated. All shall be durable and easy to maintain.*



- **Benches** shall be located so that they encourage the enjoyment of specific spaces, whether along sidewalks or in parks. They may face quieter streets to facilitate people-watching, face away from busy streets, or face each other to encourage conversation. They shall be located outside restaurants to provide places for outdoor eating, or in parks to provide places for quiet reading or contemplation.



- **Trash receptacles** shall be installed at regular intervals along streets, at key intersections, close to (but downwind of) groups of benches.. Coordinate the style of the trash receptacle with the style of the bench. Trash receptacles shall be located a maximum of 60' apart.



- **Bike racks** reduce car traffic and parking demands by encouraging people to bike to the Centre rather than drive. Locate bike racks at transportation nodes (i.e., the T-Stop), convenient locations, and public facilities. Coordinate the style of the bicycle racks with benches and trash receptacles.

- **Newspapers** should all be in one location – as in Newton Highlands not scattered throughout the village. –

- **Public Signage:** Clear, consistent, attractive and coordinated signage shall be located throughout the Centre. Directional signs shall be located to help visitors find parking and particular stores and services. Interpretive signs explaining the history of the area shall be mounted in appropriate areas. They can also be combined with orientation maps and community event information. Historic plaques shall be mounted on structures of historic or cultural interest.



- **Public Art** shall be incorporated into the streetscape design. Examples of this technique could include small water features, sculptures, benches, decorative pavings, flagpoles, murals & clocks.



1E. Street Trees: Street trees enrich the appearance and health of an urban environment. Trees shade the streets, sidewalks and buildings, mediate the scale between taller buildings and pedestrians, reduce noise and pollution, and provide shelter for pedestrians.



- Trees shall be planted at consistent intervals along the streets to establish a rhythm and an aesthetic identity to the various areas of Newton Centre. Spacing should be between 20' minimum and 40' maximum, depending on the type of street and the width of the tree canopy. On wide streets with ample sidewalks, large shade trees with high canopies shall be spaced approximately 30' apart. On narrow streets with narrow sidewalks, small trees with narrow canopies shall be spaced approximately 20-25' apart.
- Current technology for tree planting (i.e. structural soil) shall be instituted for trees planted in sidewalks.

In addition to the General Guidelines that apply to the entire Centre, we identified five distinct areas in Newton Centre, each of which needs specific design standards. These areas are Langley Road and Union Street (Low Traffic Streets), Beacon and Centre Streets (High Traffic Streets), the Triangle, Parking Areas, and Open Space. We recognize the unique function of each of these areas and acknowledge that site elements used in one area may not be entirely appropriate in another area.

2. UNION STREET AND LANGLEY ROAD (LOW TRAFFIC STREETS) *Partly due to their one-way vehicular traffic flow, and the shops and restaurants on both Union Street and Langley Road, these streets are currently two of the most pedestrian-friendly streets in the Centre. The goal of these Guidelines is to further enhance their enjoyable character.*

- Streets shall be curbless and paved with decorative pavers to enable their occasional use as a pedestrian mall.
- Sidewalks shall be a minimum of 15'-wide to accommodate outdoor cafes, benches and plantings.
- Along with street trees, street furnishings and light fixtures, decorative flower planters or barrels shall define the street



edge and lend the areas a unique identity.

- Flower baskets shall be hung from light poles, to provide color and identity.
- Bench locations shall be a maximum of 40' apart.

3. BEACON AND CENTRE STREETS

(HIGH TRAFFIC STREETS) *Beacon and Centre Streets carry the most regional traffic flow throughout the Newton Centre. While it is important to facilitate this flow, drivers should also be signaled that they are entering a town center.*



- A 10-wide treed median strip underplanted with ground cover shall be added along Centre Street, from Willow Street to Cypress Street, and along Beacon Street from Chesley Road to Centre Street. The median will serve to establish the identity of Newton Centre, and indicate to drivers that they have arrived at a populated center of activity. By dividing the street, the median visually makes the road appear less wide. It will also make it safer for pedestrians to cross.
- The median curb shall be granite and 12 inches high.
- Sidewalks shall be at least 10 feet wide to accommodate pedestrian traffic flow in two directions, window shoppers and a row of trees along the street edge. The branches shall be cut a minimum of 8 feet above the ground to provide adequate clearance and so as not to obscure the building facades and business signs.
- Banners may be hung from light poles.
- Bench locations shall be a maximum of 70' apart.

4. TRIANGLE *The Triangle should pulse with activities that attract visitors year-round, including meeting friends, shopping, dining, or watching a concert. The pathways within the Triangle serve as arteries carrying pedestrians –safely from one activity to the next both within the Triangle and in the surrounding commercial areas.*



- Perimeter sidewalks along Centre Street shall be 10' wide.
- All other perimeter sidewalks shall be 5' wide.

- Pedestrian pathways within the park will vary in width.



5. PARKING AREAS *well-landscaped and lighted parking lots can enhance a visitor's experience of Newton Centre*

- Parking lots must meet or exceed landscaping requirements in the Zoning Ordinance §30-19.
- Provide a 4'-wide minimum perimeter of planting between a parking lot and a street or public way. A low decorative fence or wall may also be used. Woven wire fencing (i.e. chain link) may not be used.
- Provide sidewalks to safely move people from parking areas to businesses.
- Light fixtures shall match those fixtures used throughout Newton Centre, and shall be located closely enough to ensure visibility without glare into adjoining properties.
- Ecologically designed drainage swales are highly recommended.



6. PARKS AND OPEN SPACES *offer a respite from buildings and traffic. They offer a meeting ground for residents and visitors, an open space for community celebrations and events, a quiet bench for lunch, or a garden to enjoy.*

- Strengthen the connection of Newton Centre with the Newton Centre Playground. Coordinate light fixtures,



street trees, trash receptacles, and benches. Particularly enhance the edge of the Playground along Centre Street, as it marks the entrance to Newton Centre from the north. Build a well-marked crosswalk across Centre Street at Tyler Terrace to enable safe pedestrian passage across the street

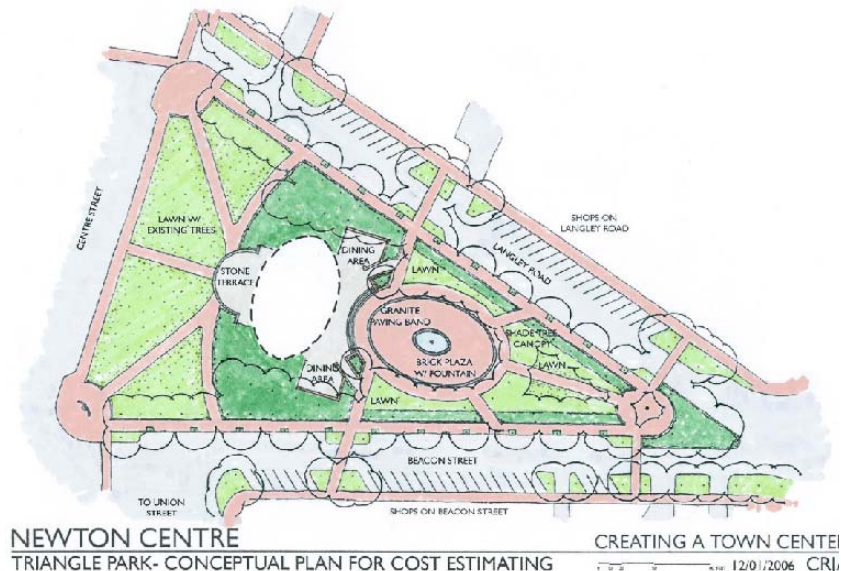
- Design seating and plantings to take advantage of sun orientation, to protect from winds, and create a variety of inviting and comfortable spaces.

Plant a variety of large trees, small flowering trees, shrubs and perennials throughout Newton Centre’s open spaces.

Finally, the Task Force also recommends that Public Sector Improvements shall be phased to minimize disruption to current businesses, residents and visitors to the Centre.

Recommendation 2: Reinvent and revitalize the Newton Centre and Beacon² Triangles in the middle of the centre as visually and socially active spaces that provide the central identity for Newton Centre.

The Task Force is committed to providing a much more attractive and socially active set of uses in the Newton Centre Triangle that provide a strong and positive identity for Newton Centre. Parking spaces in the paved parking area in the middle of the current Newton Centre triangle will be relocated to equally accessible locations on reconfigured nearby streets with diagonal parking (see below). The current green at the west end of



Sketch by Carol Johnson and Associates

this Triangle should be extended to an area of more active use. The eastern end of the Newton Centre triangle should have landscaping with outdoor seating, a fountain,

² Small triangle of open space bounded by Beacon and Union Streets and Langley Road.

plantings, and a hard surface area for other pedestrian oriented uses and events that becomes a small ice skating rink in the winter.

The Beacon Triangle should be better landscaped and include amenities such as street furniture and trash receptacles that would make it an attractive and usable space for passive recreation.

These improvements to the two triangles would be connected to landscaping and beautification improvements along adjacent streets and retail frontages. Consistent with the pedestrian improvements noted above, a strong pedestrian linkage and/or covered walkway would be created across the Newton Centre Triangle north-south between Beacon Street and Langley Road, with the potential to provide enclosed spaces or kiosks along this pedestrian way for park related ancillary uses or other uses that are not being provided for in the regular private commercial space in the centre. These general guidelines and principles are recommended by the Task Force as a foundation for a design competition for the two Triangles and the surrounding streetscape and beautification plan.

Recommendation 3: Replace the unattractive and problematic parking in the middle of the Triangle one for one with equally accessible diagonal and shared parking on other reconfigured lots and streets in the Centre.

One of the biggest challenges of the Newton Centre Task Force is to improve upon the parking and traffic conditions that exist today and to make sure any future development maintains a desirable quality of life for residents and supports the vitality as well as the history of the village center. Task Force members identified the following objectives to assure future changes to parking and circulation support these values:

- Avoid negative parking and traffic impacts of residents
- Make it easier to find parking spaces
- Maximize parking around the center
- Create more pedestrian-friendly environment
- Facilitate all modes of transportation

Below is a summary of existing conditions and recommended changes to improve upon them.

PARKING

Existing conditions

Like business owners in most places, Newton Centre merchants desire lots of parking as close as possible to their places of business so it will be easy for their customers to reach them. Because Newton Centre hosts a stop on the Green Line, commuters who live too far from the “T” to walk, may drive and park nearby. Residents who expect to enjoy quiet and safe neighborhoods often compete for parking with commuters and employees who seek free parking all day. To reconcile all these interests, the Newton Centre Task

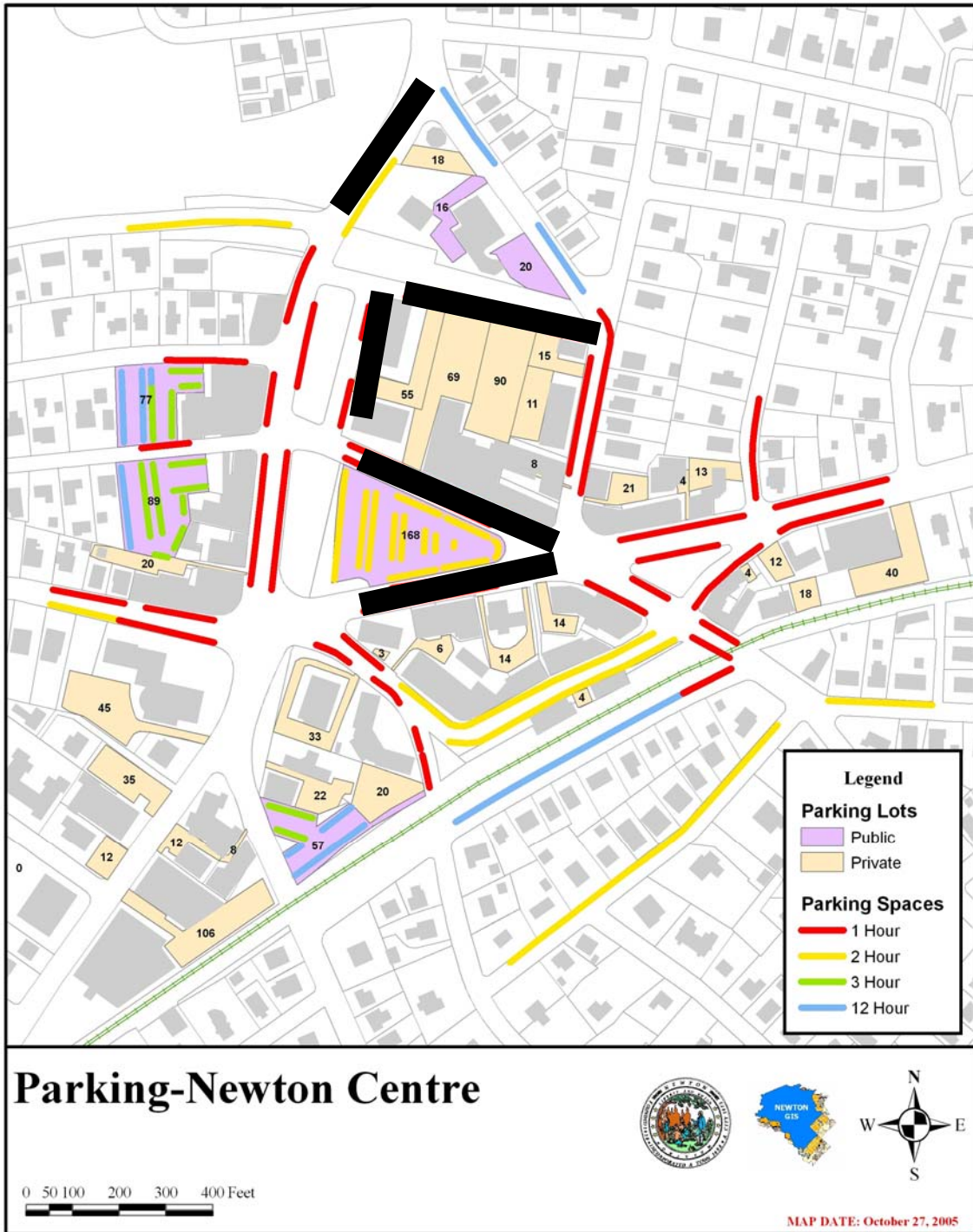
Force has sought to identify locations for convenient parking for customers while providing reasonably-priced parking for employees and a limited number of spaces for local commuters who must drive, while protecting the residential character of surrounding neighborhoods.

Parking for the Improvement Plan

The first step in realizing an Improvement Plan for Newton Centre is to relocate the existing 155 parking spaces from “The Triangle” so it can become a more attractive public space. It is important to relocate the existing parking elsewhere in the Centre because removal of parking spaces without replacement parking will increase the demand for the remaining public parking spaces. When initial data was collected in 2005, occupancy of public parking spaces in the Centre was 80% (85% is considered optimal). Removal of 155 spaces without replacement elsewhere will increase occupancy to 100% on streets adjacent to the triangle. This outcome should be avoided because it will increase traffic as more cars circle the blocks in search of spaces and could discourage patrons from visiting the center.

To relocate the spaces in “The Triangle,” the Task Force supports a strategy with two features:

Diagonal Parking. In order to create additional parking spaces on the streets, several areas have been identified in which parallel parking spaces could be converted to diagonal parking spaces. Because diagonal spaces take up less curb space than parallel spaces, replacing parallels with diagonals creates more spaces. Possible areas for conversions are shown in bold black lines on the following map and as described in the following for a total of 80-100 new spaces:



- Lyman Street. Net gain of 37-47 spaces
- Langley Road. Net gain of 14-17 spaces
- Centre Green Street. Net gain of 13 spaces.
- Beacon Street between Centre Street and Langley Road. 10 new spaces.
- Centre Street between Tyler Terrace and Gibbs Street. Gain 8-12 parallel parking spaces.

Shared Parking. For those spaces that cannot be relocated on the streets, the Task Force recommends consideration of shared parking arrangements with private property owners to encourage better use of spaces in their lots where feasible. The Task Force's initial findings indicated that many private spaces are underutilized and incorporating these spaces into the pool of available parking will improve the overall parking situation. Most of the local churches have parking available on weekdays and several offices have an oversupply of parking on weekends. Where hours or days of operation of nearby businesses are different, use of the same spaces at different times of the day offers a low-cost way to maximize available spaces.

Parking Management. Management of all available spaces is needed to assure they are used to their best advantage. Today, long-term parkers occupy many of the short-term spaces that are closest to businesses and would be best used by short-term parkers, primarily shoppers. However, all-day parkers, especially employers and their employees must compete for relatively few long-term spaces and often park in short-term spaces or in nearby neighborhoods, despite restrictions on those streets and the threat of being ticketed.

- **Placement and pricing of meters.** It is recommended that long- and short-term parking spaces be strategically placed around the village center, with the short-term spaces nearest the businesses and long-term spaces slightly farther away from the core. At the current rate of \$.25 an hour, long-term spaces are half the price of short-term spaces and will attract long-term parkers to the perimeter of the village because most people are willing to walk farther as the price declines. Drawing long-term parkers away from the most convenient short-term spaces in the core will make more spaces available for shoppers, who generally are willing to pay more for the convenience of being close to their destinations. Pricing of parking and citations will need to be adjusted periodically to encourage desired behaviors.
- **Enforcement.** Enhanced parking enforcement in the center and the surrounding residential areas is recommended to reinforce desired driver behaviors, maximize use of parking, and protect the residential character of surrounding areas.
- **Employee parking permits.** An employee parking permit program is recommended to encourage employees to park in long-term spaces. Such a program would eliminate the need for coins and provide a means for employers to help pay for employee parking.
- **Public information about parking and alternative forms of transportation.** There are a variety of ways to access Newton Centre and information about the options should be provided to merchants and the public along with maps and pricing of available parking.

It is important that the viability of proposed diagonal parking and roundabouts (see discussion of traffic below) be examined further. While it is physically possible to place diagonal parking spaces on the streets as proposed, their impact on traffic and circulation is untested. Their feasibility depends somewhat on their numbers, location and time limits proposed for the spaces. Each movement in and out of a parking space represents a

time delay for moving traffic. When there is a high volume of traffic and frequent movements in and out of spaces, the potential for delays and back-ups into intersections increases. Thus, it is essential that a professional traffic engineering study be conducted to assess the impact of diagonal parking in the various locations proposed on circulation around the center and to ensure they do not degrade existing conditions.

The Task Force is committed to assuring that adequate, accessible, convenient and safe parking remains an attractive feature of Newton Centre and is recommending that the parking currently in the Triangle be replaced with additional parking to be provided in widened diagonal configurations on Langley Road, Lyman Street, Centre Green Street and on Beacon Street and on several other adjacent streets and in more effective sharing of various parking lots near the Centre. Detailed parking improvement plans and configurations and parking management plans need to be refined but those being considered demonstrate that no additional parking structures would be needed to replace the 155 spaces being relocated from the Triangle.

The Task Force also recommends that a parking management plan be adopted that provides for improved enforcement, special provision for employee parking permits and aggressive use of shared parking options for other areas outside of the immediate Triangle area.

Recommendation 4: Continue to explore street improvements and traffic modifications that would calm and improve traffic flow in the Centre and reduce vehicle pedestrian conflicts without exacerbating through traffic or overflow traffic on neighborhood streets.

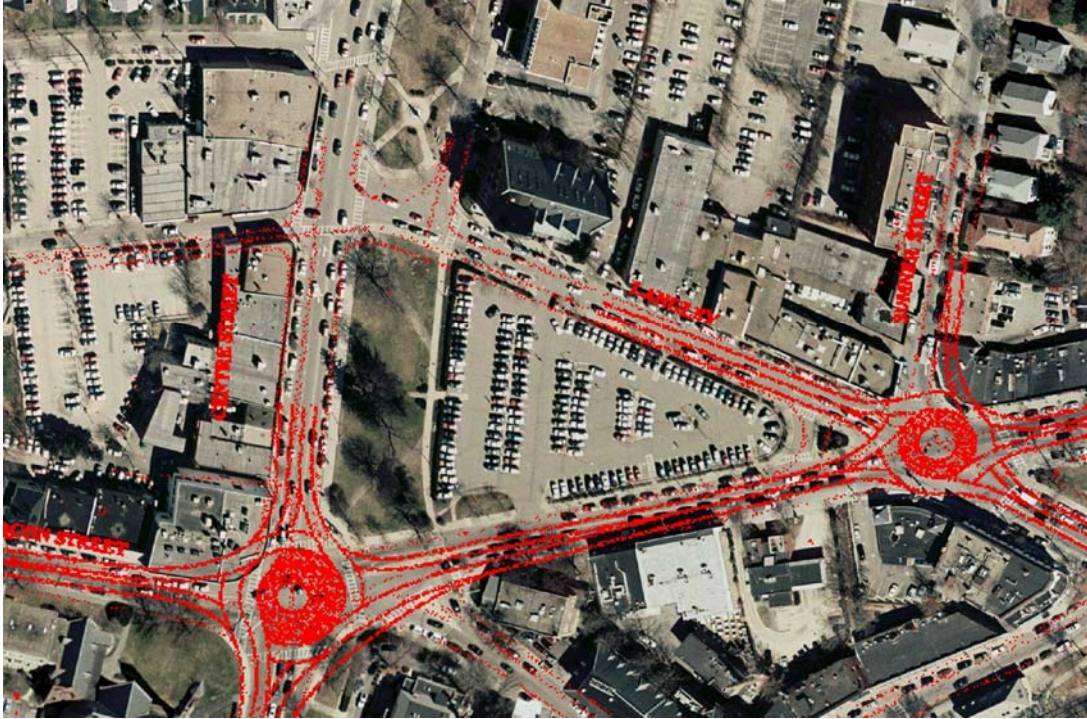
On the weekdays, traffic in Newton Centre peaks from 7:30-9:30 am and again between 4:30 and 6:30 pm. At peak times, traffic backs up at the key intersections at several locations especially on Beacon Street between Centre Street and Langley Road and also at the merger of Cypress and Centre Streets just south of the Beacon/Centre Streets intersection where traffic stacks up past Holly Cleaners at 1314 Centre Street.

From a pedestrian perspective, the existing streets are not welcoming. The wide streets that accommodate the traffic become additional barriers to a cohesive village that can be intimidating to cross at the key intersections on Beacon Street, especially at peak traffic times. Frequently, pedestrians trigger the pedestrian walk cycle on the traffic signals and cross before the signal changes if there's a break in traffic. By the time the light changes, the pedestrians are gone and vehicles are stopped in all directions for no reason. The Task Force recommends traffic calming as a way to reduce driver frustrations and protect pedestrians.

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming devices are intended to allow traffic to move freely, yet slowly. In Newton Centre, several different types are recommended. Two roundabouts are

proposed at the intersections of Beacon with Centre Street and Langley Road. Crosswalks that are raised or have a change in paving materials and bulb-outs that extend sidewalks farther into the street also are considered appropriate on the approaches to the center for signaling ones arrival in a village center and reinforcing the notion that traffic is expected to slow down and defer to pedestrians. Another visual signal is the proposal to include a landscaped center island on Centre Street. This would provide a resting place for pedestrians and reduce the distance crossed at a time by half.



Roundabouts

Roundabouts are considered traffic-calming devices because they slow traffic but do not stop it. This eliminates time delays that cause impatient drivers to divert onto side streets and increases the capacity of the roads so as to facilitate the smooth flow of traffic.

Roundabouts are smaller than rotaries and have a center island positioned so it causes cars to divert around it. In addition, the roads approaching the roundabout are curved and narrowed which slows traffic. They are considered much safer than signalized intersections because of slower speeds and because drivers are guided around the circle in one direction; this results in fewer accidents or injuries and virtually eliminates head-on collisions. The cost of installing a roundabout is generally about the same as for a signalized intersection, yet less costly to maintain because they have no signals to maintain or upgrade. Often they are attractively landscaped or designed with fountains or monuments that serve as a gateway feature and focal point for a destination.

Because they do not require traffic signals, cars stop only for pedestrians. For added protection, pedestrian-activated lights can be installed to enhance visibility of pedestrians, especially at night. Well-designed roundabouts include shorter, more visible pedestrian crossings than achievable with signalized intersections. Small islands (which can be extended into a landscaped boulevard) are provided in between the lanes of traffic and

provide a refuge for pedestrians halfway across the street. There are fewer points of conflict between pedestrians and cars compared to signalized intersections because traffic flows only in one direction and with splitter islands, pedestrians only need to observe traffic approaching from one way as they cross. They also don't have to watch for cars turning right on red lights.

Based on current pedestrian counts, existing pedestrian traffic will not cause delays in travel time or degrade the vehicular Level of Service with the proposed roundabouts. However, more extensive analysis should be done in conjunction with the parking study discussed in the preceding section.

A preliminary traffic study was done during preparation of this report. It showed that two roundabouts – at the intersections of Beacon and Centre Streets and Beacon Street and Langley Road – may be feasible, but survey data was not available at that time. The Task Force supports commissioning a professional traffic engineer to conduct a more in-depth study of these intersections as well as of the traffic patterns throughout Newton Centre.

Recommendation 5: Encourage the reconversion of non-residential space above ground floor commercial in Newton Centre back to residential use wherever feasible.



The Task Force believes that residents and residential uses in the village centre further enliven the Centre and serve other important environmental, safety, and diversity goals as well. Given that the village centre previously had a substantial number of housing units above ground floor retail that have over the years been converted to office space, and given that there is an unmet need for affordable housing for young working people and others of moderate income or wishing to downsize their homes in Newton, the Task Force supports the development of more flexible ways for property owners to meet residential parking requirements with off-site solutions.

Recommendation 6: Establish an active, empowered, and enabled Newton Centre Neighborhood and Business Improvement Organization to help guide and implement the recommended improvement programs and ongoing maintenance and preservation of the Village.

The Task Force recognizes the need for a Newton Centre Neighborhood and Business Improvement Organization to take ownership and sponsorship of the Newton Centre Improvement Plan going forward. This group should spearhead the sourcing of financing and the development of a management plan and design review process for the village centre. The capital costs of the minimum recommended improvements are estimated to be about \$6-8 million dollars for the improvements to the Triangles, the beautification and streetscape improvements of adjacent linked streets and associated traffic calming and parking improvements.

Sources of financing would include current capital improvement resources of the parks and public works departments, special CPA funds that would be matched with local fundraising and sponsorship efforts, and potential business improvement district financing and state and federal funds. This group should also develop and participate in a proactive design review process that would provide clear design guidelines for public and private improvements and development to assure preservation of the attractive village scale and character of the Centre.

Appendix B:

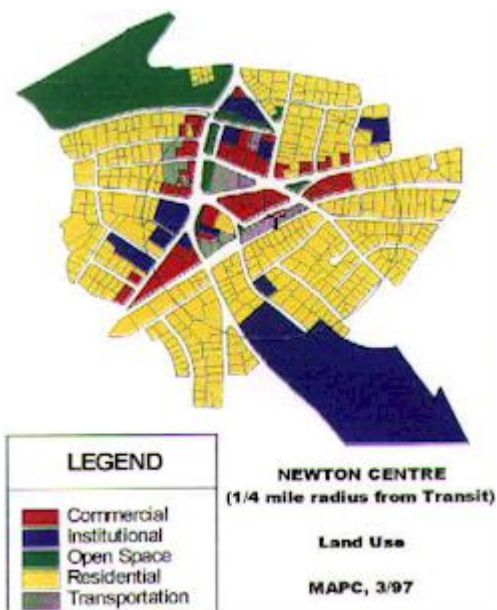
Unsprawl Case Study Newton Centre, Massachusetts

by Kent Stasiowski and Justin Hollander

Newton Centre is a dense, mixed-use community located on a major mass transit artery within the City of Newton, a suburb of Boston first linked to transit—via the Boston and Albany Railroad—in 1830. The Centre is one of thirteen areas classified as village centers by the city. Though it wasn't until 1959 that public transit regularly served Newton, the community has continued to evolve.

Newton was settled in 1630, but it wasn't until 1720, when residents erected a central meeting house, that Newton Centre was first recognized. The area was popular for mill development because of its proximity to the Charles River. Newton Centre remained a small village throughout the 1800s and into the early 1900s, when the main thoroughfare, Centre Street, housed "a provisions store, haberdashery, bank, and battery of public telephones," according to George M. Sanborn of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority library in Boston. The area changed after World War I, when extensive redevelopment occurred, especially in the Centre's core. Second- and third-story apartments above retail were either removed or converted to office or additional retail space just after the war.

"The Centre's center began to take on its current appearance in the 1950s, when the antiquated Mason School was torn down and replaced by a parking lot behind the common....," says Sanborn. "Then began what local merchants like to call the upgrading of the square, as stores were remodeled, more sophisticated customers arrived." Priscilla McQueen, a native of Newton Centre, believes the Centre still has "a village-like feeling, but maybe I've lived here too long." Sanborn points out, however, that others think Newton Centre has lost its village flavor as it has become more retail- and business-oriented.



Today, the City of Newton's total land area is 18.1 square miles, with a population of 83,000. In Newton Centre, there are over 2,700 households with a population of nearly 8,000 people. Within the 1/4-mile radius around the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority light rail stop (Newton Centre "T" stop, Riverside Branch, on the east-west Green line) there are nearly 600 dwelling units at a density of 7.4 units per acre. According to 1990 Census figures, there are 1.81 autos available per household in Newton Centre, which is higher than the 1.46 for the Boston metropolitan area, but lower than most suburban

locations. Only 60 percent of the MBTA transit riders living in Newton Centre, however, have access to an automobile.

Newton Centre, compared to the Boston metropolitan area, is noticeably affluent. Only six percent of the population is below poverty level, while the average is 15 percent for the Boston metro area. The median household income in Newton Centre ranges from \$52,000 to \$82,000, as compared to \$30,000 for metro Boston. The Newton Centre village of Newton is also largely homogenous, with 92 percent of the population white, as compared to 87 percent in the metro area.

Transit and Land Use at Newton Centre

Though many definitions of transit-oriented development include mixed-use development that follows the siting of a transit stop, Newton Centre as a community was around more than two hundred years before the MBTA light rail stop was constructed. Newton Centre can be classified as a transit-oriented development, however, based on the village's relationship to the stop, and based on the fact that the stop has both created and changed patterns of development and resident mobility patterns directly adjacent to the stop since its opening.

The transit stop lies near the end of the Riverside "D" line in a primarily suburban region of Greater Boston. Bus service is on the "52" route that travels north-south above and below Newton Centre in the Newton area. The City of Newton also has a relatively new shuttle bus service providing service between the city's villages. The service connects the villages to existing MBTA bus and light rail stops. Additionally, Boston College runs buses through Newton Centre for its students, faculty, and staff.

Light rail service is regular, running every five minutes during peak commuting times, and about every ten minutes at non-peak times. Bus service is less frequent, running every thirty minutes weekly, and up to every hour on weekends.



Union Street in Newton Centre.

Ridership from Newton Centre averages just under 1,100 riders per day on the MBTA Green line. While there are peak commutes in the morning and evening, the valley of ridership between peaks is not as low in Newton Centre as in other nearby locations. Seventy percent of Newton Centre transit commuters walk to the transit stop, twelve

percent park and ride, eleven percent are dropped off, and only seven percent take the bus. No riders indicated that they ride a bicycle to the transit stop. More than half of those who walk to the transit stop can do so in less than five minutes, and another forty percent in under fifteen minutes.

A recent survey of transit riders arriving in Newton (though not necessarily Newton Centre) from other locales indicated that 41 percent arrive for work, twelve percent for personal business, and 3 percent for social or recreational purposes. Only six percent of riders indicated that they use Newton for shopping.

While overall usage numbers for all types of trips is not available, U.S. Census Journey to Work data shows that Boston is the most frequent work destination for commuters coming from Newton Centre's transit stop. Newton is a distant second, and Cambridge is farther still in third. The data confirms the function of Newton Centre as a point of origin for Boston commuters, also affirming the transit-oriented development as a point of origin for residents who work in close proximity to their homes.

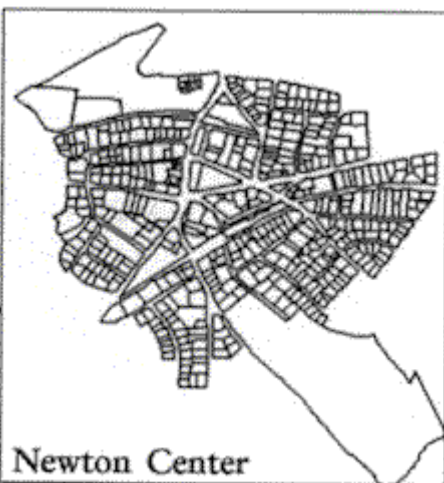


Wide sidewalks and interesting street facades enhance the pedestrian orientation of this street in Newton Centre.

While the majority of Newton Centre residents do drive to work, it is significant that thirteen percent walk and fourteen percent take public transportation on a regular basis. Over a quarter of the residents, then, either use the centrally located transit or walk to their work destinations, an essential characteristic of a transit-oriented development. Of those who work in Newton Centre but live outside of the village, fourteen percent walk and nine percent use existing transit.

Newton Centre's central core area is comprised primarily of retail and office uses intermingled with residences. Surrounding neighborhoods are comprised largely of residences, small retail, and large institutions. Residential uses make up over 3.3 million square feet, while commercial is over 582,000 square feet.

Of the commercial square footage, retail comprises over half, office over 30 percent, and restaurant uses the remaining share. Newton Centre's retail shops serve as a destination for many, though are not a large draw for those outside of Newton itself according to studies by the city's Economic Development Commission. In fact, the Newton Centre Merchants Association is working to change the character of the Centre from a commuter point of origin to a commercial destination. The Association does not necessarily see



eye-to-eye with proponents of reduced automobile use and increased transit, viewing parking spaces as the keys to local commercial success. The Association does not believe the transit stop is a significant enough mode of transportation for incoming retail and other users.

Newton Centre as a Transit-Oriented Development

There are seven primary characteristics of a transit-oriented development exhibited by Newton Centre:

Interconnected Street System

An aerial view of Newton Centre reveals that most of the major streets connect in a grid-like fashion. Of the 28 streets in a 1/4-mile radius around the MBTA light rail stop, only three end in a cul-de-sac or dead end.

Local Destinations Within Walking Distance

Within the 1/4-mile distance around the transit stop, there are schools, places of workshop, community service centers, daycare facilities, six green space and park areas, residences, and numerous shops, restaurants, and offices. Three educational institutions border Newton Centre, and one mile north of the transit stop is the Boston College School of Law.

Pedestrian-Friendly Design

Newton Centre's continuous sidewalk system creates safe and convenient routes for pedestrians. The sidewalks on residential streets are wide enough for two people to walk abreast, and in the core areas the sidewalks can accommodate four or more abreast, measuring between six and ten feet wide.

Other aspects of design welcoming pedestrians include mature street trees and other landscaping, on-street parking, streetscaping with street furniture, and highly visible pedestrian crosswalks. At high-volume intersections, for example, raised or otherwise more visible crosswalks have been established where traffic must stop if a pedestrian is in or nearing the crosswalk.

Topography Suitable for Walking

The topography of Newton Centre is varied. In the central commercial core adjacent to the MBTA transit stop, the land is primarily flat. There are small hills in the northwestern residential neighborhoods, but these do not present a reported problem for elderly, young, or disabled.

Density and Pedestrian Scale

The street layout of Newton Centre is not a typical grid. The formation of the streets over time created fairly large blocks and relatively infrequent intersections. However, less grid-like intersections tend to have a strong orientation for the pedestrian: many of these

intersections neck-down to make them easier to cross. In the central commercial core, the largest block is approximately 500 feet by 380 feet. The distance between intersections in the residential neighborhoods, for comparison, is even greater, up to 800 feet.

The density is high enough to support transit, but does not manifest itself into large office towers or apartment buildings. Most commercial space is housed in one- or two-story buildings on small parcels in the central commercial core. The average building's footprint is about 5,800 square feet, with the largest at 51,500 square feet. Most of the larger buildings use architectural elements to break down the facade into the appearance of even smaller buildings. They feature pedestrian-scaled windows, overhangs, awnings, recessed entryways, attractive signage, and the like.

Residences are generally of a medium density, and predominantly single-family homes. There are a fair amount of duplexes and multiple-family dwellings, however. The largest apartment building is three stories with 50 units, but such buildings are rare.



Newton Centre's "T" stop on the MBTA's "Riverside" Green line.

Street Facing Buildings and Rear Parking

Buildings face the street and parking is reserved for the rear—with the exception of on-street parking—for all buildings adjacent to the transit stop and in the core commercial center. Most residential streets also maintain an inviting character, with the buildings facing the street and garages on alleys or driveways to the sides of houses with garages in the rear.

Many businesses share parking, clearly marking parking lots with signage, create clear walkways within the lots so that customers can easily and safely walk between the lots and the stores, and maintain an attractive rear facade. The rear lots are either public metered, private, or shared private. Shared private lots are shared between businesses that operate at different business hours, such as a lot reserved for a drugstore and bank during the day, and restaurants at night. Large signs direct motorists to public and private lots throughout Newton Centre, but these are secondary to pedestrian routes among streets, buildings, and the transit stop.



The MBTA light rail station at Newton Centre.

Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

Transit Stops Accessible by Foot

The centrally located MBTA light rail stop is easily accessible for the approximately 2,000 households in the 1/4-mile radius. There are pedestrian bridges, pathways, and ramps that offer easy access to the transit stop for those traveling by foot. Additionally, there are bus stops located even closer to the central commercial core, where Centre, Beacon, and Cypress Streets intersect. The stops are across the street from each other, but wide sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian-friendly street design allow access for all abilities of pedestrians.

For riders arriving at the MBTA stop via car, there is a limited number of parking spaces.

The transit stop serves as a commuter hub in the morning and evening. Restaurants and retail shops cater to commuters, offering food and drink, newspapers and magazines, and other items ideal for the person on the go. The walkways are safe in and adjacent to the transit stop, and indeed the whole area is active from early in the morning to late in the evening, helping to ensure that crime is not a major concern.

Conclusion

The challenge of maintaining Newton Centre as a viable transit-oriented development is constant. While commuting ridership is virtually guaranteed, ridership will need to change if the transit stop is to serve the purpose of bringing additional shoppers, and their money, into the commercial core, as well. That will likely require the vested interest of local business and political leaders as well as involvement from regional entities, including MBTA. But as the village's history has proven, the core area so far has always been supported by rail, first heavy and then light. Newton Centre residents and visitors have every reason to believe that the light rail stop and adjacent uses will support the village center as a transit-oriented development far into the future.

Toward the Revitalization of Newton Centre

Combined Group Two and Three Report Newton Centre Task Force



sketch by Mongkol Tansantisuk

June 16, 2008

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY		3
I.	Vision Statement.....	5
II.	Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan	7
III.	Benefits of a Revitalized Newton Centre.....	8
IV.	Historical Background	9
V.	The Potential of the Centre Triangle.....	11
VI.	Land Use Recommendations by Sub-Area	15
VII.	Parking	23
VIII.	Traffic	33
IX.	Pedestrian Passageways	36
X.	Housing	37
XI.	Design Guidelines	41
XII.	Environmental Sustainability.....	44
XIII.	Zoning and Overlay District	45
XIV.	Economics and Financing	50
XV.	Mitigation.....	54
XVI.	Governance	54
XVII.	Conclusions.....	55
XVIII.	An Action Plan.....	56

Under separate cover, an Appendix has been prepared which contains the various Subcommittee Reports and other additional information that form the basis of this Report. For more information, please refer to that document.

Members of Combined Group Two and Three who participated in the discussions, preparation of the Subcommittee Studies and Reports and/or in assembling this Final Report:

F. Gerard Adams	Vicky Greenstein	Fran Seasholes
K. Edward Alexander	William Hagar	Jane Shoplick
Warren Brown	Candace Havens	David Stein
Raymond Ciccolo	Ann Hochberg	Andrew Stern
Alderman Victoria	Todd Krasnow	Maurya Sullivan
Danberg	Joyce Moss	Eve Tapper
Kevin Dutt	Peter Lew	Terry Wendt
Russell Feldman	Marianne Paley Nadel	Elizabeth Wilkinson
Rob Gifford	Kumar Nochur	Anatole Zuckerman
Jennifer Grams	Sean Roche	David Zussman

Executive Summary

Toward the Revitalization of Newton Centre

Combined Group Two and Three Report Newton Centre Task Force

Our Groups envision a Newton Centre that will be a model of 21st Century suburban village revitalization, regaining its historic scale, charm, and character – a community that has a “heart” and a “sense of place”.

Our vision consists of three primary objectives:

- We seek to create an interconnected village center, joining the three separate shopping areas of Newton Centre with an active focus, replacing what is now a separating element – an asphalt parking lot.
- We seek a mix of mutually-reinforcing businesses, residences, and community facilities, attracting people to its shops, social venues, and cultural activities.
- We seek physical improvements within existing business zones and the adjoining publicly-owned land, making the Centre pedestrian friendly, interesting and beautiful – a place where people want to visit, meet friends, and enjoy diverse activities.

To make our vision a reality, the Revitalization Plan calls for the following actions:

Land Use Recommendations

- Transform the Newton Centre Triangle, removing the surface parking lot and creating an all-season focus for public activity, consisting of:
 - An active public plaza, on the east end, for civic events and informal gathering during pleasant weather, containing an attractive fountain, seating groupings, space for festivals, art displays, and craft fairs, and a wintertime skating rink.
 - A signature building in the center of the Triangle, containing restaurants, retail shops, spaces for cultural, educational, and recreational activities, and an enclosed passage from Langley Road to Beacon Street.
 - The existing tranquil garden, the Newton Centre Green (Leo Levy Park), on the west end of the Triangle, with lawns, flower beds, trees, and shrubbery.
- Make comprehensive streetscape improvements with landscaping, shade trees, attractive lighting, street furniture, and decorative paving on widened sidewalks, planted medians, underground utilities, and raised pedestrian crossings.
- Allow construction of up to 150 housing units, consistent with the recommendations of Newton’s Comprehensive plan to meet the needs of households of various income and age groups and to take advantage of Newton Centre’s lifestyle offerings and convenient public transportation, following smart growth principles.
- Encourage Newton Centre commercial property owners to upgrade their locations, using presently underutilized space within Newton Centre’s commercial area to-

expand retail commercial space by up to 20 percent, in accord with Newton's Comprehensive Plan's build-out analysis.

- Establish a Newton Centre Zoning Overlay District that will give private property owners incentives to execute high-quality, energy-efficient development within specified design standards and sustainability guidelines without excessive regulatory burdens. The overlay district regulations would call for consolidation of land parcels, mixed uses, building heights comparable to the Centre's historic buildings, attractive and durable materials, interior open courtyards, pedestrian walkways, and flexible provisions for parking.
- Sponsor studies toward achieving improved traffic routing, perhaps with urban roundabouts (at Beacon and Centre Streets and at Beacon Street and Langley Road) to accommodate smooth movement of local- and through-traffic and to facilitate pedestrian circulation between Newton Centre's business blocks.
- Plan parking spaces to replace the parking being displaced from the Centre Triangle and additional spaces to meet growing needs over time:
 - On street for short term parking, and
 - In peripherally-located parking structures for longer term parking.

Financing Recommendations

- Set up a District Improvement Financing (DIF) plan, taking advantage of the future tax revenue potential of new construction to finance bond-based public improvements without affecting the City's bond rating.
- Encourage Newton Centre property owners and tenants to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) to take responsibility for maintenance of sidewalks and other public areas and for programming of Newton Centre village activities, utilizing City services and funds raised by the BID.
- Investigate Transport-Oriented Development Funds (TOD) and numerous other possible means of financing Newton Centre improvements.
- Assure that parking improvements to be made will be self-financing.

Management Recommendations

- Establish a Parking and Traffic Advisory Group and/or a Parking Authority for professional management of parking and to facilitate financing.
- Set up a Newton Centre Advisory Commission consisting of Aldermen, commercial property owners, merchants, and residents, to plan and guide the ongoing revitalization of Newton Centre.
- Initiate a mitigation program:
 - To replace parking removed from the Triangle and elsewhere during the renovation process,
 - To minimize disruption to current businesses during construction activity, and
 - To facilitate potential relocation and expansion opportunities within the Centre resulting from new development.

Toward the Revitalization of Newton Centre Combined Group Two and Three Report

I. VISION STATEMENT

Our vision for the future of Newton Centre is an integrated, active, pedestrian-friendly village center. One that takes advantage of its economic opportunities and better serves its various stakeholders. One that attracts people from surrounding areas to shop, socialize, and learn. We envision a Newton Centre that will be a model of 21st century development while regaining its historic scale, charm, and character. We want a community that has a “heart” and a “sense of place.”

Decisions about the desirable scale of the buildings and activities in Newton Centre govern discussion of the revitalization. In physical terms, we aim to achieve a scale consistent with Newton’s historical image and consistent with existing buildings along Union Street and on the east side of Centre and Centre Green Streets. In economic terms, our objective is to have enough pedestrian traffic and activity to support locally oriented-business as well as “destination” shops. In social terms, we want to see a village center that attracts nearby residents to its shops, social venues, and cultural activities. *We do not advocate enlarging the footprint of Newton Centre’s business area.*

We seek to rebuild an interconnected village center with a mix of mutually reinforcing businesses, residences, and community facilities. Rather than continue to encourage additional auto-oriented development or allow the construction of a large commercial center in Newton Centre, we prefer growth patterns that will enhance the quality of life, improve the pedestrian experience, and maximize environmental sustainability. If we do nothing, we risk watching the village center be shaped by inappropriate development. Instead, we hope to guide the growth of Newton Centre along socially desirable, economically responsible, and environmentally sustainable paths.

Our vision of Newton Centre includes:

- Transformation and development of the public areas including the Centre Triangle to provide a central focus, to better knit the elements of the district together, to provide a richer and more comfortable pedestrian experience, provide better defined and more usable public space, and improved and more varied commercial outlets.
- An increase in housing (up to 150 units, as recommended in the Newton Comprehensive Plan) providing housing opportunities for people of all income levels who want to live in a vibrant center and who are otherwise underserved in our community. With more residents in the central area of Newton Centre, we envision more people on the sidewalks and in the shops during the day and in the evening, revitalizing the area.
- A commercial district with a wide mix of retail stores focused on the desires of the surrounding neighborhood. This implies new retail space with in-fill construction on

presently underutilized sites or new residential-over-retail buildings that are suitable for a variety of neighborhood-oriented and specialty businesses.

- Improved traffic flows with parking moved out of the Centre Triangle to the periphery of the business area.
- Improved pedestrian passageways, some lined with shops to link Newton Centre's shopping areas, parking, and public transportation.
- Improved outdoor environment, with underground utilities, wider sidewalks, improved signage and lighting, new landscaping and street furniture, and a park/plaza area focused around an attractive fountain in the Triangle.
- Growth that reflects the environment imperatives of our generation, following guidelines for sustainable development.
- Excellence in place-making, manageable change, and empowered property owners. A zoning Overlay District will give property owners design guidelines and the ability to execute our vision of high-quality development without excessive regulatory burdens.

To make our vision a reality, we must:

- Establish a public-private partnership for Newton Centre, guided by a Newton Centre Advisory Commission.
- Carry out professional traffic studies aimed at reducing traffic congestion and implement their conclusions on traffic routing and control.
- Establish a Parking Authority that can finance and build convenient parking structures to replace parking displaced from the Triangle and to meet growing needs, without encroaching on residential neighborhoods.
- Modify zoning requirements under a zoning overlay district to encourage and guide high quality development on private property.
- Provide incentives to create housing for a broad range of income and demographic groups over retail stores in renovated old buildings and in new structures.
- Encourage and provide incentives for development leading to a more suitable mix of retailers as well as cultural and educational institutions. We hope to see locally-oriented businesses like specialty groceries, flower shops, cheese shops, and book stores.
- Take advantage of "smart growth" funding and related financial support for planning, infrastructure support, and on-going expenses.
- Encourage business owners to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) to help finance maintenance and street improvements.
- Organize a District Improvement Financing (DIF) program to use increases in tax assessment value for financing of public improvements.
- Plan carefully to mitigate the impact of construction on business and households.
- Establish an Advisory Commission and a Parking and Traffic Advisory Board.

II. CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Our plan is consistent with several goals of the City's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use, Housing and Economic Development sections of the Comprehensive Plan all reference potential development in the City's village centers. The Comprehensive Plan states:

"A strong case can be made for moderate growth in some [larger village centers]... and change in the balance of uses in others. Providing incentives for the creation of more multifamily housing in the larger centers deserves serious consideration. So does the application of a more proactive approach to planning. It is appropriate for the City to encourage the uses and design criteria it deems preferable while discouraging those which are not." (Land Use Section p. 3-31)

"One story buildings are often inefficient and a waste of expensive land so should generally be discouraged in village centers." (Land Use Section p. 3-32)

"The City needs to look at each of the larger [village] centers and develop a plan to enhance it. One size does not fit all; but certain facts are clear. Existing parking patterns and locations are not optimal. Parking in those locations should be shared or otherwise consolidated. The elimination of on street parking in selected locations would also do much to improve traffic flow." (Land Use Section p. 3-31, 3-32)

"Improve parking in village centers." (Economic Development Section p. 6-7)

"Residential development that is well located in relationship to schools, commercial services, large employers and existing patterns of residential type and character benefit the City in multiple ways" (Housing Section p. 5-14)

"Housing retained or developed in or near village centers supports village businesses, and having a broad array of village services within walking distance benefits residents. That linkage strengthens the vitality and quality of life for the (entire) area." (Housing Section p. 5-14)

"Plan the renewal of village centers, aiming to provide vibrant attractive village centers serving the adjacent residential communities." (Economic Development Section p. 6-7)

"Attract people into the village centers at off-hours by developing cultural facilities focused on the local community -- small theaters, art galleries etc. -- and maintaining local parks with improved facilities such as public gardens, outdoor cafes, bandstands..." (Economic Development Section p. 6-7)

"Encourage mixed-use in the village centers by promoting housing above retail. Increasing density allowing mixed use developments in the village centers would increase the population with walking distance and as a result would likely expand the available range of goods and services offered there. It would also increase the stock of housing located close to employment centers and public transportation." (Economic Development Section p. 6-7)

"Consider the designation of overlay districts to regulate land use in village centers." (Economic Development Section p. 6-7)

Our plan for Newton Centre advocates these ideas. Over the past three years, the Newton Centre Task Force has worked diligently to create a plan specific to this area. Our plan includes Public and Private Property Design Guidelines for the Centre as well as options for improving the parking and traffic situation there. We also recommend adding up to 150 new housing units in Newton Centre mostly above ground-level retail and approximately 140,000 sq. ft. of commercial space. Finally, we seek more diverse, but complementary uses rather than have the Centre continue to be dominated by banks, beauty salons, and a parking lot as it is today. To achieve these goals we recommend adoption of an overlay zone for Newton Centre that provides incentives for desirable development patterns, designs and uses.

III. BENEFITS OF A REVITALIZED NEWTON CENTRE

Our plan is a winning proposition for everybody involved --- property owners, business owners, residents, and the City itself.

Property Owners

Much of the development we envision for Newton Centre will be carried out by private parties, who will be able to construct mixed-use buildings containing apartments and commercial space under modified zoning regulations. Private sector development will be justified by the economic gains to the property owners from better use of their properties.

Business Owners

New and existing businesses in the Centre will also benefit from this plan. We recommend constructing one or more strategically located parking garages to provide better parking options for both employees and customers. Also, a more attractive streetscape, wider sidewalks, pedestrian pathways and additional public amenities will improve the overall pedestrian experience and bring more foot traffic to the area.

Residents

Newton Centre residents should notice less cut through traffic on residential streets under this plan. We call for the possible installation of roundabouts at the two major intersections in the Centre as well as other smaller traffic improvements. It is anticipated that these improvements will keep the traffic moving along the main streets rather than through small neighborhood streets. Residents will also enjoy their close proximity to a more walkable, dynamic village center.

City of Newton

A rough estimate indicates that the City of Newton could net an additional \$1.5 million dollars in annual tax revenue from the development we encourage in Newton Centre. As part of this development, we recommend approximately 140,000 sq. ft. of new commercial space and 150 new housing units that can provide housing for people who are underserved in our community, particularly downscaling empty nesters, starter families and workplace housing and will help Newton reach its goals with respect to affordable housing.

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Newton Centre developed as a true village center, an integrated commercial and residential area, in the late 19th and early 20th century. It was one of the first railroad suburbs. People walked from one errand to another and from home to the train and back. Newton Centre had a mix of uses: social, business, cultural, and educational. It was essentially a transit-oriented development pattern that is now called *smart growth*. Historically this type of development was built out of necessity; today, we aspire to build it by choice.

Many of the Centre's prominent buildings were three or four stories high, ranging from 40 to 60 feet in height, comparable to the churches and the Victorian and Queen Anne homes in the immediate vicinity. A number of these beautifully proportioned and richly designed buildings still exist in Newton Centre.

As older commercial buildings were demolished; replacement buildings had only one or two floors--many originally intended as temporary fill-ins, so-called "taxpayers" buildings. Tax assessment was based on the number of floors. Parking regulations required all new developments to have "on-site" parking. This limited the size of the buildings since ground area necessary to meet the parking requirement occupied the majority of the site.

Over time, the growing use of automobiles reshaped development patterns in Newton Centre. In the late 1950s early 1960s, the Mason School in the Centre Triangle was demolished. A new, modern school was built outside of the commercial district. Rather than replace the school at its original location with another facility that would contribute to the Centre's vitality, the old school site was converted into a parking lot. This was expected to be a temporary use meant to last only until Newton revised its zoning code to reflect modern needs and requirements. Instead, this "temporary" use has lasted for over 50 years!

Also in this period, several homes in other central locations including Pelham and Pleasant streets were demolished and replaced with surface parking. Roads and turning radii were enlarged to make the area easier to navigate by car and truck, but in turn made it harder to navigate by foot. Today, Centre and Beacon Streets, the main thoroughfares in Newton Centre, carry large volumes of traffic. Much of that traffic simply passes through the area. Some shoppers who do drive to the Centre do not park once to do multiple errands, but use their cars to go from one side of the Centre to the other. The

result has been a village divided into three separate strip malls lacking common focus or connection, as it remains today.

The mix of commercial and other uses has also changed drastically over the years. Residential use in the central area of the village declined and was replaced largely by offices. Many stores serving local everyday needs have been replaced by banking offices and beauty salons that draw customers from a wide area. There are few educational, cultural, or social venues. As a consequence, Newton Centre has lost its identity as a multi-dimensional center for the community. Rather, it has become a central location, drawing customers from far away, principally for destinations like banking, grooming, and selective fashion shopping. Numerous restaurants and fast-food shops round out the offerings. Newton Centre is no longer a village center; it has become just another commercial crossroads dominated by shops, banks, and offices.

NEWTON CENTRE, TODAY

Intersection of Beacon and Sumner: A view to the fire station from Lyman Street



The Parking Lot in the Centre Triangle: A View from Lyman Street southward

The deterrents to quality new development in Newton Centre range from questions of economic viability, transportation and parking, to zoning regulations.

- The lack of multi-family housing in the Centre and the emphasis on auto transportation has adversely affected the economic viability of traditional locally-oriented stores such as groceries, flower shops, cheese shops, hardware stores, and small bookstores.
- Major traffic arterials have attracted “destination” businesses and offices.
- Pedestrian traffic is discouraged by the distance between the shopping areas and by heavy traffic loads on the main thoroughfares.
- Zoning provisions that a) prevent mixed use, b) require low buildings by right (or with special permits) and c) require on-site parking have discouraged redevelopment.
- The small parcel size and multiple ownership of commercial sites have also made mixed-use development difficult.

It may just be a matter of time, however, before a group of owners agrees to work together or a single individual assembles multiple parcels, and proposes a significant project with little or no public guidance. Under Chapter 40B¹, a substantial housing development could be built without public input. One may also remember that current zoning in the business area of Newton Centre (BU1 and BU2) is similar to the zoning that existed on much of Boylston Street and, using the Special Permit process, led to the development of the Atrium and the proposed Chestnut Hill Square development. Patterns of growth will ultimately reflect economic and social developments in the area, but they may be influenced to reflect public preferences by thoughtful forward-looking planning and appropriate incentives.

It is now time to correct the mistakes of the past and to plan improvements that will set the character and quality of the Centre for the future and successfully transform Newton Centre into a lively new village center. Such development should not and cannot be imposed on the community. Growth and change will occur in any case. We hope to set up a framework that, with public and private cooperation, will lead to a revitalized Newton Centre.

Let us act now to guide positive development!

V. THE POTENTIALS OF THE CENTRE TRIANGLE

The Centre Triangle lies in the middle of Newton Centre and is critical to the revitalization of the Centre. We must make it, once again, the heart of Newton Centre: the focus of the activities that draw pedestrians; an open space, attractive winter and summer, and, importantly, the link that pulls together the separate business blocks to make them into a community.

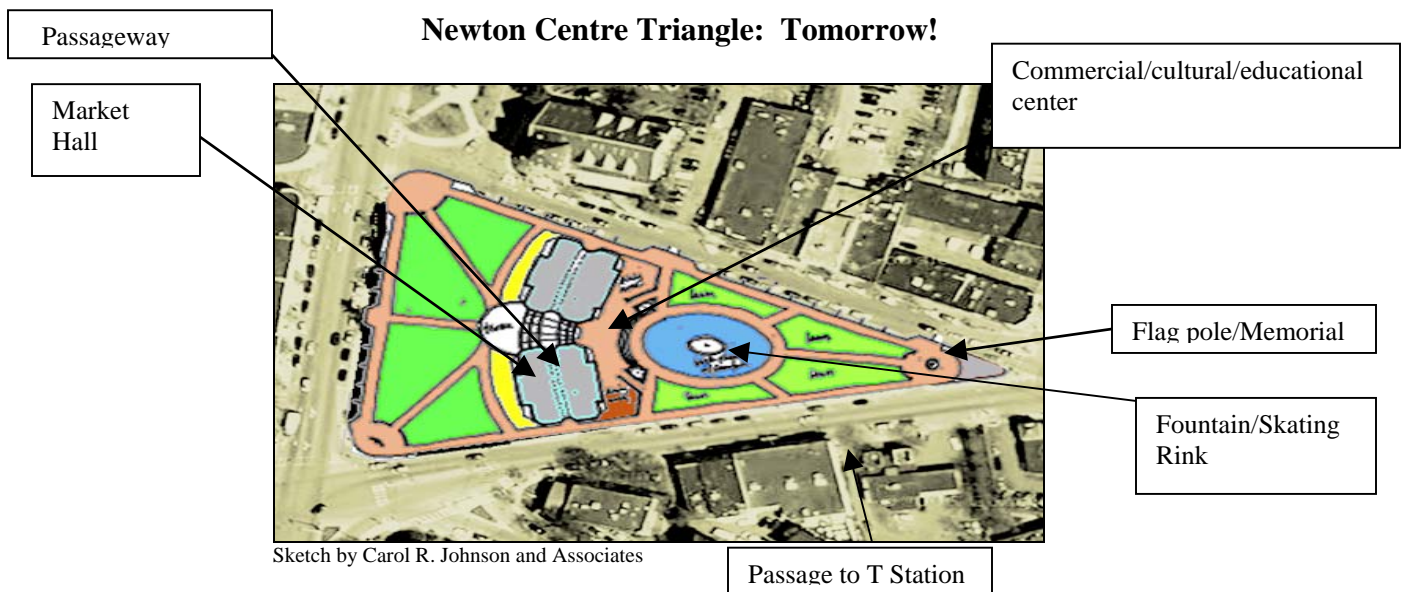
¹ M.G.L Chapter 40B: See Appendix

Today, the Centre Triangle is a separating element. It serves as a parking lot for customers and employees of the strips of shops, restaurants, and banks in the central area of Newton Centre. Its entrance and exit locations contribute to traffic congestion by mixing mid-block turning movements with through traffic. Access from parking to and from the shops is hazardous to pedestrians who are induced to jaywalk across the surrounding busy streets



Newton Centre Triangle—Today!

Tomorrow the Centre Triangle could be an island of excitement and interest at the heart of the Newton Centre community. By relocating the spaces in the current parking lot to nearby locations and by separating short-term convenience parking from long-term employee parking, the Triangle would be transformed into a gathering place. Graced with an attractive building and active open space, the Centre Triangle area would become a visually attractive and socially active space. It would link to but not encroach on the green park along Centre Street and provide an interior pathway among the surrounding retail areas.



A building for community and shopping activities would replace the parking lot along with a plaza containing a fountain/skating rink and landscaped open space. Active use landscaping at the eastern end would complement the tranquil garden of the western end. A terrace would be built on the eastern side of the building overlooking the fountain. Plantings, and plentiful outdoor seating would be provided. Convenient pedestrian paths would cross the Triangle, allowing people to walk easily between the Langley Road, Centre Street, and Beacon Street blocks.

Most important to making the Triangle an effective focus for pedestrians is the building shown on the map. It would assemble a variety of shops on the first floor to serve the local community. It would also contain a market hall/social center, a place for people to congregate, and indoor and outdoor cafés depending on the season. Cultural and educational activities (including perhaps the All Newton Music School which, in the past, expressed interest -- see letter in the appendix), which could draw people into Newton Centre, may be accommodated on the upper stories.



Sketch by Mongkol Tansantisuk

A new structure linking the Beacon/Union Street Shops with the Langley Street Shops

A protected passageway, perhaps open in the summer, will make for easy connections.

An Indoor Passageway



The building should be on a scale with the beautifully detailed buildings along the Centre greens and with future development around the Triangle. The size of the building will depend on what is necessary to meet the commercial and civic uses envisioned, perhaps 30,000 to 60,000 sq. ft. Financial considerations are also a significant factor: the building's revenues must cover costs and maintenance as well as perhaps contribute to the beautification of the rest of the Centre Triangle.

Sketch by Mongkol Tansantisuk



We prefer that the center of the building be transparent (glass enclosed) while reflecting the beautiful stone and brick structures on both sides. As is shown on the drawing, one possibility is two structures connected by a glass roofed market hall.



A plaza with a fountain and a gathering place would occupy the rest of the Triangle. In the summer, this outdoor space would provide a location for public gatherings, meetings, and, perhaps, just eating ice cream. In the winter, the building would provide an interior passageway from Langley Road to Beacon Street and the fountain could be adapted to a skating rink.

Recommendations for the Newton Centre Triangle

We view the redesign of the Centre Triangle, now occupied by a parking lot, as critical to providing Newton Centre with a central focus. We need to replace the parking lot that currently divides the three existing retail components of Newton Centre, with active uses that unite it. A new building should be built in the general location of the old Mason school east of the existing Centre Green. Its scale should be consistent with the existing historic buildings that flank it along the east side of Centre Street. The building's uses should include ground-floor retail and restaurant space, room for cultural and educational activities on the upper stories and a publicly accessible auditorium for performances.

The Centre Triangle building should also offer covered pedestrian passageways from the businesses on Langley Road to those on Beacon Street. Its glass-enclosed center should provide a view from Centre Street eastward through the building and into a new, active Centre Triangle park. The park should have terraces and landscaped open space.

VI. LAND USE RECOMMENDATION BY SUB-AREA

Our Property Use Subcommittee concluded that in the business areas of Newton Centre land is underutilized and poorly allocated from economic as well as design perspectives. Large parts of Newton Centre, particularly the northern part of the block between Langley and Lyman Streets, are devoted to surface parking. The very center of the village, the Centre Triangle, is also the site of a barren parking lot as noted above.

One- and two-story business buildings line the major streets of the Centre, their height limited by zoning regulations on density (FAR) and building heights and the on-site

parking requirement. Pedestrian connections between the various sectors of business in Newton Centre are dangerous and inconvenient because of distance, street width, and a large volume of traffic.

There is little housing, so that Newton Centre's business area lacks an active resident population. The lack of housing also reflects regulations requiring parking on site and difficulties of creating mixed-use buildings without going through the onerous special permit process that is too time-consuming and costly for small scale development.

Increases in housing and retail business are desirable in Newton Centre to improve vibrancy and the village character of the community. In the following section, we present a strategic discussion of land-use in various areas of Newton Centre to consider possibilities for its improvement. The discussion will focus first on publicly-owned areas and then on privately-owned properties.

Strategy for Newton Centre

- **Create a Core:** It is important to cluster the retail, dining, and public service facilities in Newton Centre and allow them to be mutually supportive to create a synergy among uses. The Centre Triangle is critical in the re-establishment of a vibrant village center.
- **Create a Pedestrian Environment:** Provide ample sidewalks, benches, and small courtyards to enable people to combine shopping, dining, and socializing.
- **Make the Existing Greens a Part of the Pedestrian Experience:** The present Newton Centre Greens are an important resource. They must be better linked into the future village center.
- **Design a Management Organization and Plan:** Create an organization of City Aldermen, property owners and merchants and surrounding residents to advise and guide development. A Newton Centre Advisory Commission would provide an ongoing forum for guiding and evaluating Newton Centre development.
- **Maintain the Village Centre.** Maintenance of streets and other public properties, a traditionally public responsibility has often proved to be inadequate. A cooperative organization of Newton Centre businesses could assume responsibility for some items of maintenance such as sidewalk snow removal, trash removal, and similar housekeeping items paid for by a Business Improvement District (BID).

Central Area Improvements – Public Properties

The key parcels, the Centre Triangle and the Greens are City-owned. Our recommendations include:

- As stated previously, replace the parking in the Triangle with a Centre Triangle building and park, attracting pedestrians to active retail and service establishments and public uses. Improvements in the Triangle, devoted to retail, restaurants, and public spaces can act as a central focus. Newton Centre will have an attractive central core with a wide range of activities. This is critical to achieving a vibrant village center.

- Renovate Newton Centre’s major green areas along Centre Street.
 - The northerly green space with the flagpole (along Centre Green Street) is in need of landscaping improvement. The daily maintenance of this area could be assumed by the BID.
 - The southerly green space (Levy Park), situated in the Core Area, is an active park used for the annual harvest festival as well as for recreation. Newton Pride, which currently provides a spectacular and diverse flower garden, would continue to maintain their area. The pedestrian walkways can be integrated with the Centre Triangle building so that the entire plot bounded by Centre Street, Beacon Street and Langley Road will function as an integrated area.
- Construct parking structures to replace the parking spaces lost by removing parking in the Triangle. The new parking structures would provide employee and commuter parking and would also provide for growth as activity in Newton Centre increases. Locate the parking structures at the edge of the business area encouraging traffic to avoid the main Newton Centre intersections and to discourage parking on neighborhood streets.
- Limit on-street parking in the central area of Newton Centre to short term (one hour maximum). Convenient street parking should be short-term; to serve the various short-term uses such as visits to banks, coffee shops, drug stores, and specialty groceries, etc.
- Widen sidewalks to create pedestrian-friendly areas and allow for sidewalk cafes on Langley Road, Union Street and Beacon Street.
- Organize Langley Road as a site for weekend and evening “street events”. Closing Langley Road between Centre Green Street and Sumner Street on weekends or evenings would create a pedestrian space for street concerts, art displays, health education and similar public oriented events. Removing the curb on the northerly side and defining the travel lane with movable bollards would facilitate this activity.
- Add or replace street trees, benches, pedestrian lighting, street lighting, directional and store location directories, and trash receptacle. Under-grounding of utilities would greatly improve the appearance of the Langley Street business block. Give special attention to providing some type of enclosure to eliminate the clutter from the numerous newspaper dispensers. Consider special sidewalk pavement materials, such as brick to give a special character to these pedestrian walks.
- Make all possible effort to reduce traffic congestion at the two major intersections in Newton Centre. Professional traffic studies will be required to evaluate alternative options. One promising possibility is the construction of small “urban round-about” at the Centre/Beacon and Langley/Beacon/Sumner intersections. An alternative is a one-way traffic scheme. It is not the intention to add traffic capacity but to keep the existing traffic moving at a constant but moderate speed.
- Provide clearly-marked mid-block pedestrian crosswalks to accommodate convenient and safe pedestrian movement.

- Provide a landscaped median between traffic lanes where possible on Centre Street to facilitate pedestrian crossing and provide an appropriate entry to the Village Centre.
- Provide a landscaped median, street width permitting, on Beacon Street from Grant to Langley/Sumner Streets terminating in a landscaped urban roundabout as an entrance to Newton Centre.

Newton Centre Village Improvements – Private Properties

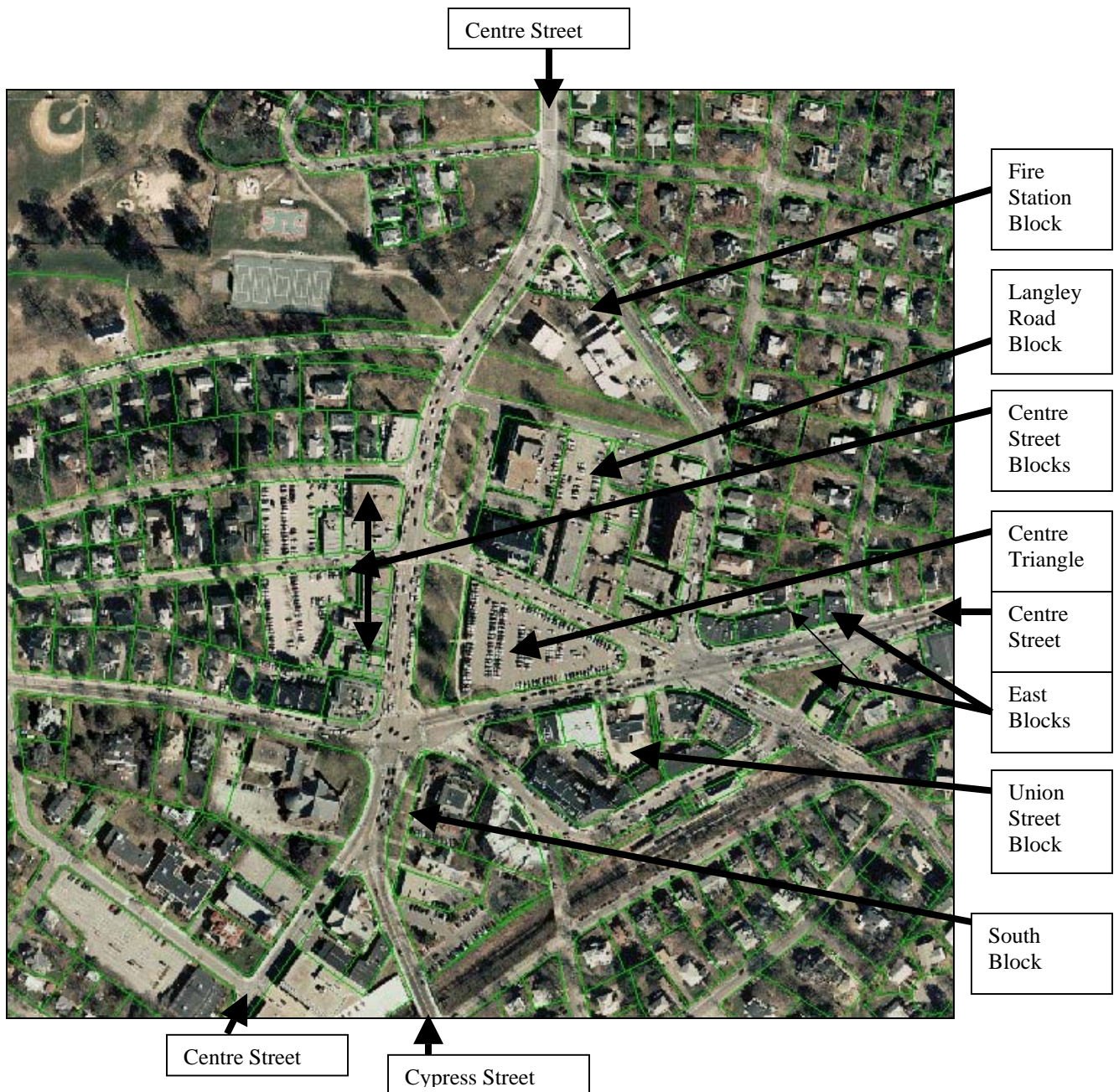
- Small individually-owned parcels lack sufficient scale to permit modern, pedestrian friendly, residential and business development in Newton Centre. Merging of properties or cooperation between owners would improve possibilities for making major improvements.
- In Newton Centre’s business area, there are six major separate privately-owned (with exceptions) land areas and some publicly-owned land area. Most privately-owned land comprises numerous parcels and some sites have multiple owners. They are the:

Core Areas

- Langley Road Block bounded by Langley Road, Sumner Street, Lyman Street, and Centre Green Street.
- Union Street Block bounded by Union Street, Langley Road, Beacon Street and Herrick Road.
- Centre Street Blocks – parcels facing Centre Street between Tyler Terrace and Beacon Street.

Transitional Areas

- South Block bounded by Union Street, Braeland Street, MBTA tracks, Cypress Street. And Centre Street.
- East Blocks – parcels lying east of Sumner Street and Langley Road on both sides of Beacon Street.
- Fire Station Block bounded by Lyman Street, Centre Street and Willow Street.



It is important to recognize the different characteristics, location and size of the individual blocks making up the Newton Centre Village. They are very different and demand different criteria.

- The Langley Road Block, Union Street Block and Centre Street Block form the core of Newton Centre. These blocks have the capacity to accommodate substantial development since they are well buffered from the residential neighborhoods. Varied building heights of 3 to 5 floors could be possible.
- The other parcels are transitional blocks between the commercial center and the adjacent neighborhoods. These parcels are suited to lower density commercial re-development and/or housing. Varied building height of 2 to 4 floors are compatible in height to the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Objectives, Restrictions and Guidelines for Private Properties

Actions on the public properties and zoning regulations will provide the framework that will guide and determine the vitality and character of the Newton Centre for many years. Public improvements will be a catalyst for additional private development. Private properties would receive benefits from the public improvements as well as incentives for private owners to undertake long-term property development in keeping with Newton Centre's village character.

This section does not attempt to suggest specific zoning or other changes but provides a broad discussion of possibilities and uses for properties mentioned during the Task Force deliberations.

Changes in the private properties would occur gradually, zoning permitting. While development or redevelopment will be subject to zoning guidelines and design criteria, the decisions to make changes rest with the individual owners who will recognize the advantages of strategic zoning changes and who will see the economic potential of a more active Newton Centre



A Refreshing Terrace

CORE AREAS

Langley Road Block: The north portion of this Block is under developed with buildings and provides parking for approximately 195 cars² as well as service access for individual stores. Redesign of this parking area, along Lyman Street, would be an important consideration in any zoning modification or redevelopment plan.

- The owners of the combined parcels could work with the City to construct a parking garage in this area. Some of it could be on private land and some of it could be on public property along Lyman Street. The aqueduct easement held by the MWRA

² This total includes the spaces for the two banks on the west side but not the parking spaces at the rear of the Newton Community Development Foundation housing on Sumner Street nor the spaces around the small office building at the corner of Sumner and Lyman Streets.

represents a barrier, though not an insurmountable one, to using land immediately north of Lyman Street. The parking structure would provide replacement parking for displaced existing parking as well as parking for any new uses within the Langley Block and the planned uses in the Centre Triangle.

- Mixed-use (retail and housing) along Langley Road with varied height of three to five stories is consistent with neighboring structures. Along the northerly side facing Lyman Street, moderate density residential of two to four floors would serve as a transitional use to the existing homes and apartments along Willow Street with a bonus density to owners who cooperate with the City to provide some parking on the lower levels of the Lyman Street side of their properties.
- Pedestrian pathways should be provided between Lyman Street and Langley Road, especially if a parking structure is located on the north side of Lyman Street. These could provide active uses, retail or restaurants, along at least a portion of this pedestrian way. Pedestrian pathways could vary in width and should have at least one landscaped plaza or “mini-park”. Small-scale retailing may fit well along some of the pedestrian pathways.
- A parking garage along Lyman Street could also provide parking for a mixed-use development. The private developers may satisfy needs for parking by making a financial contribution to the construction of a parking structure.

Union Street Block: The Union Street Block illustrates the potentials of the rejuvenation of Newton Centre. The frontage across from the T-Station contributes to the character of the village community, including a number of attractive small specialty shops.

- This block contains limited parking and service areas. The parking (about 25 cars) is around two new one floor structures, Peet’s Coffee and Sovereign Bank. These two buildings demonstrate the problems with the small parcel size and current development restrictions in the Centre: small buildings with limited parking, laid out in an inefficient manner with multiple street entrances and exits creating congestion on the street and disruption to pedestrian traffic. Mixed use (retail, office and housing) with varied height of three to four floors would be appropriate for any replacement structures.
- Development potential exists on either side of the H. H. Richardson style train station.
- As redevelopment occurs, maintaining the existing pedestrian pathway from Union Street to Beacon Street is important. The portion now passing between the open areas provided by the surface parking might be increased in width. A “mini-park” or small plaza can be provided. Active business uses would face a redeveloped walkway.
- There is a *de facto* second pedestrian way behind the Bank of America building at the corner of Union Street and Beacon Street. Upgrading the passageway and making it permanent would improve pedestrian circulation.

Centre Street Blocks: The City owns property in the rear of the commercial area of these blocks, the Pelham Street and Pleasant Street parking lots. Multiple parcels and depth of parcels presently limit the development opportunities in this location. There are

four sub areas: 1) North of Pleasant Street, 2) between Pleasant Street and Pelham Street, 3) between Pelham Street and the access alley, and 4) parcels facing Beacon Street.

- Mixed use is appropriate for this area which abuts residential use. Construction should be limited to three stories. Any parking structure behind the existing buildings must minimize traffic and visual impact on the adjacent neighborhood.

TRANSITIONAL AREAS

South Block: This area consists of City-owned parcels, the Cypress Street Parking Lot, the old Newton Centre Library structure (now used by the Health Department) and a narrow green strip along Centre Street. Privately-owned are an apartment house and related private parking, a commercial structure between the two City-owned parcels, and the historic Women's Club building, now used for retail and offices (and surrounded by one lane of parking)..

- The City property (existing Cypress Lot) is a one of the suggested locations for a parking garage serving the southern portion of Newton Centre.
- It may be possible to combine portions of the Cypress parking lot, a privately- owned parcel, and the old Newton Centre Library parcel, as a housing site forming a transition between the Newton Centre Core and the residential neighborhoods.
- An extension of a parking structure onto air rights over the MBTA tracks may also be possible and would also serve needs for commuter parking.

East Blocks: The parcels north of Beacon Street are immediately adjacent to a residential neighborhood, so redevelopment would be limited to three story structures. Parking is an issue. It may be possible to use the land to the rear of the buildings facing Beacon in a more effective manner.

- North of Beacon Street, the existing building, used for auto repair, behind the shops and related parking is not a compatible use. The property could provide a small short term parking area to serve neighboring shops.
- The parcels south of Beacon Street are buffered from the residential area by the MBTA tracks and topography so that four-story structures would be appropriate. Existing housing to the east, however, would call for a buffer of residential or open space.
- Parking is limited and curtails any development unless a public/private approach occurs to construct a parking garage south of Beacon Street serving the easterly portion of Newton Centre. This would also provide a parking destination on the east for traffic approaching from that direction.
- South of Beacon Street there are other uses, a gas station and auto service business, which may not be compatible with a pedestrian dominant village center. A parking lot or structure on this property could provide the necessary parking.

Housing and non-retail uses are more appropriate in this area. Multiple parcel ownership may be a deterrent to a comprehensive development of this property.

- The City owns the hillside triangle green (Langley Road and Beacon Street) but the size of the property and its slope stand in the way of alternative use.

Fire Station Block: This block is suited for residential use. It could serve as a transition between the higher density Langley Road Block and the single-family neighborhood to the north and east.

- The current uses on the property consist of the Fire Station, Fire Department Headquarters and Communication Center, and a salon/spa. It may be possible to incorporate a new Fire Station and/or Headquarters/ and Communications Center in a housing complex, but in any case, the function that these facilities provide must be maintained.
- The MWRA easement and underground aqueduct poses a challenge. The use of this property will require agreements with the MWRA or legislative changes.

VII. PARKING

A goal of the Newton Centre Task Force is to improve current parking and traffic conditions and to make sure future development maintains a desirable quality of life for residents and supports the vitality as well as the history of the village center. In addition, our plan for the Newton Centre Triangle (outlined in a previous section) necessitates relocating the parking currently in the Triangle parking lot to other locations in the Centre.

Parking survey data collected by the Parking and Traffic Subcommittee suggest, contrary to intuition, that currently there is usually sufficient parking. But perceptions are different. And while there may be enough physical spaces, the location and management of these spaces causes or exacerbates some tangential problems:

- Driving around to find the "perfect" parking spot in front of your destination contributes to traffic congestion;
- The mix of spaces -- long-and short-term -- is inadequate. As a result long-term users often "feed the meter" in short-term spaces;
- Current parking regulations, that require owners to provide on-site parking, are inconsistent with optimizing land use and pedestrian connections.

Our Groups identified the following objectives to assure that future changes to parking and circulation support these values:

- Eliminate surface parking on the Centre Triangle
- Minimize negative parking and traffic impacts on residents
- Create a more pedestrian-friendly environment
- Make it easier for convenience shoppers to find parking spaces by maximizing short-term parking on the street

- Satisfy needs for employees, shoppers and diners for long-term parking by building parking structures on the periphery, close to each of the principal business areas in the Centre and to public transportation.
- Pursue shared parking where possible
- Eliminate the requirement to provide parking on-site
- Facilitate other modes of transportation besides private cars
- Improve parking operations and maintenance with a new parking management system or a Parking Authority.

Alternative Locations for Parking in Newton Centre

The Subcommittee on Parking and Traffic made extensive studies of the needs for and possibilities for providing additional parking in Newton Centre.

Replacement of the Centre Triangle Surface Parking Lot and Future Parking Demand

Elimination of the Centre Triangle parking lot calls for replacement of 155 short-term parking spaces. Additional spaces can be created by consolidating parking lots on the south side of Lyman Street with the cooperation of property owners. Some of this parking can be replaced on the street, for example, by using diagonal parking, and providing additional parking on Lyman Street but this is likely to be insufficient. Moreover, to meet growing parking needs, it will be necessary to build at least one parking structure.

If “active” business and cultural space is added by locating a building on the Centre Triangle and if, as we anticipate, additional private construction occurs elsewhere, parking demand is likely to increase. The uses and scale of additions will determine future parking needs. These needs will build up gradually as renovation occurs and as activity increases in Newton Centre. Shared parking, between commercial and residential or with neighboring churches, could reduce these requirements.

Street parking options

While the open area of the Centre Triangle is converted into a public gathering space, replacement parking could be located in several places:

- Lyman Street. This street has a low volume and can tolerate delays that may occur with the addition of 35-40 new parking spaces. Because spaces are accessible from the rear of stores and on the perimeter of the center, they should be designated as long-term spaces to improve employee options. If it is not possible to widen Lyman Street to accommodate diagonal parking, consideration could be given to making it a one-way street to accomplish diagonal parking.
- Centre Green Street. This low-volume street can accommodate several diagonal spaces on the west side of the street where there are no curb cuts.

- Centre Street between Gibbs Street and Tyler Terrace. Approximately 8-12 parallel parking spaces can be added. Since they would not be in front of any shops and are peripheral to the center, they could be useful for long-term employee parking.
- Private lots, especially those used by churches and some offices. During construction, these lots could be used temporarily in lieu of spaces displaced in the Centre Triangle lot. A waiver of parking requirements to allow use of church and/or office parking spaces at times when they are not otherwise in use is a possibility. To permanently use these spaces for replacement parking, a change in current zoning is required.
- Langley Road. Diagonal spaces on the north side and elimination of parallel spaces on the south side would not increase the number of spaces, but would place them nearest the stores for easiest access during and after construction. This would be safer for pedestrians because now they often jaywalk if their cars are parked across the street. Since cars backing out of traditional diagonals have limited visibility, for safety reasons, back-in diagonals are sometimes recommended. Back-in diagonal spaces allow drivers to see the street when they exit and also allow for rear loading from the sidewalk.
- The private surface parking lots behind buildings with frontage on Langley Road (and access from Lyman Street). Re-grading and repaving of these sites could result in as many as 50 new parking spaces. Public use of the new spaces would need to be secured and businesses could continue to have use of the spaces for their staff and patrons. Short-term spaces are recommended closest to the shops and long-term spaces designated to the rear of the lots.

Parking garage options

In the longer-term, one or more parking structures will be needed to serve new retail, residential, and cultural uses in Newton Centre, and to accommodate long-term parking. We looked at several locations for these parking structures. In addition to the ones described below, the redevelopment of the Centre Triangle Plaza could also include short-term parking below ground to serve the businesses and educational institutions in the proposed Centre Triangle building. While we do not actively support or oppose this underground parking, we believe that there are more cost-effective locations for a structure elsewhere in the commercial area.

A possible Lyman Street parking structure

An appropriate location for a parking structure on the north side of the Centre is along Lyman Street either adjacent to or within the Langley Road and Fire Station blocks. It could be located either on publicly or privately owned property or some combination of the two. This location provides direct access to existing as well as future uses on the Langley block and could connect to the rest of the commercial district through pedestrian pathways between the Langley Road buildings.

Options to build a structure on public land are limited by placement of the underground aqueduct running parallel to Lyman Street on MWRA property. It will be necessary to

reach agreement with the MWRA for its elimination or its replacement with a smaller steel pipe.³ The City's political leadership has not had discussion with the MWRA Board. Alternatively, it may be possible to get home rule legislation to deal with this issue.

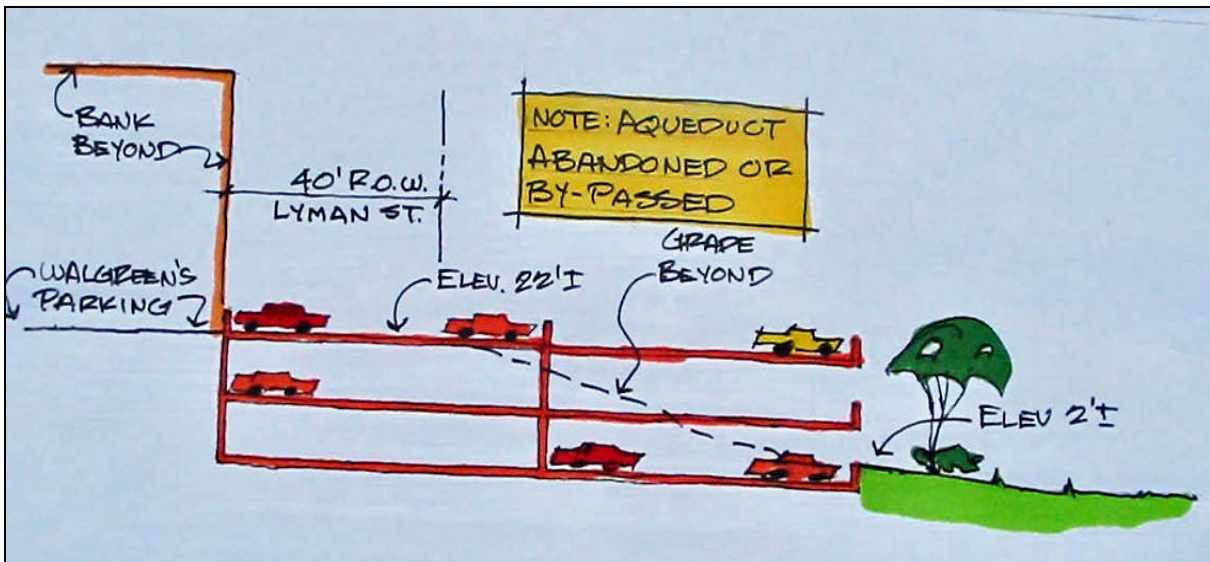
A parking structure could hold as many as 300 cars on two levels (500 cars on three levels in the future) on the steeply sloping site. It would require demolition of a small storage structure behind the fire station. Its capacity would both replace parking lost in the Centre Triangle and meet the future needs of growing business and cultural activity on the north side of Newton Centre.

³ Discussions with the MWRA staff indicate that the pipe is not presently used but remains an alternate in case of need. The MWRA staff stated that they do not have plans to abandon the site in the foreseeable future.



Lyman Street Garage

Lyman Street Parking Structure (facing west) covers the street and slope



We also looked at other possibilities for the Lyman Street site.

- Redevelop and reconfigure the Fire Station block to accommodate a new, modern Fire Station, multi-family housing and a public parking structure. The multi-family housing could be a good transition from the commercial area to the residential neighborhood.
- Collaborate with property owners on the Langley Road block to extend the parking structure onto privately-owned properties. The Langley Road block building owners

and tenants would benefit directly from the parking and would also retain the rights for substantial development under existing or new zoning. In exchange for the right to build a parking structure, the City could adjust zoning requirements and allow additional development along Langley Road. Furthermore, it would appear that housing could be accommodated along Lyman Street to buffer the garage. Shared parking, therefore, is a distinct possibility.

Cypress Street Lot for Longer-Term Parking

The Cypress Street lot is well located to serve people doing business in the south of Newton Centre and those who use the T station. It currently serves both commuters and employees. Additional levels of parking on this site would have minimal impact on residents. Braeland Avenue separates the MBTA tracks from existing residences and there is only one house nearby that faces Braeland Avenue adjacent to the site. In July 2007, MBTA representatives expressed a willingness to work with the City on a plan to build a parking structure on the Cypress Street lot that would extend onto MBTA property and possibly over the T tracks.

A possible design, shown below, retains the surface lot for short-term parking for customers in the area. The structure extends over the tracks and will provide a sound buffer to adjacent businesses and residents. Design of the structure will need to be sensitive to them as well and should include landscaping along Braeland Avenue to complement the streetscape and screen the building. The use of private properties is not needed to construct such a building and access to an adjacent private lot can be retained. The existing pedestrian path to the MBTA station would remain in its current location. This structure could accommodate 200 spaces on two levels.



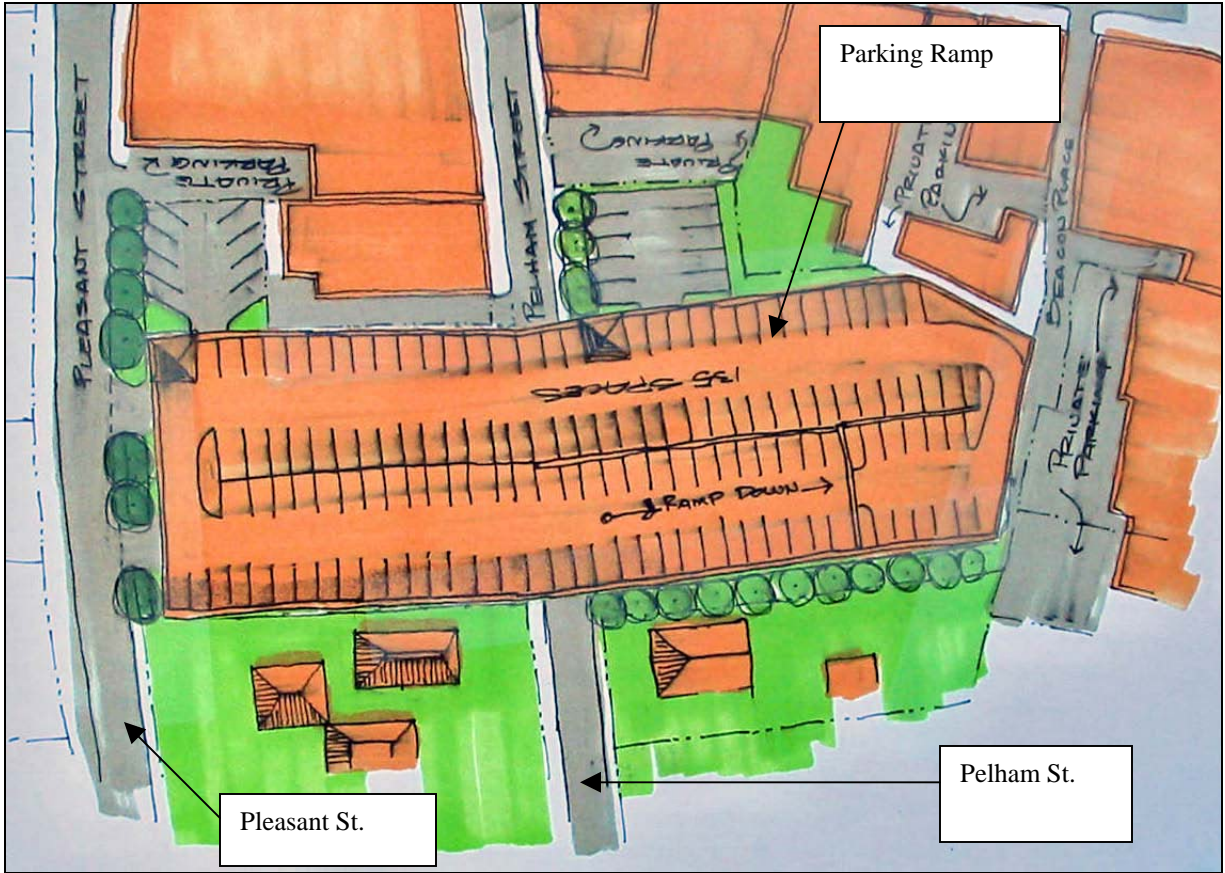
Cypress Street/Herrick Road Parking Structure



Some Examples of Well-designed Parking Structures

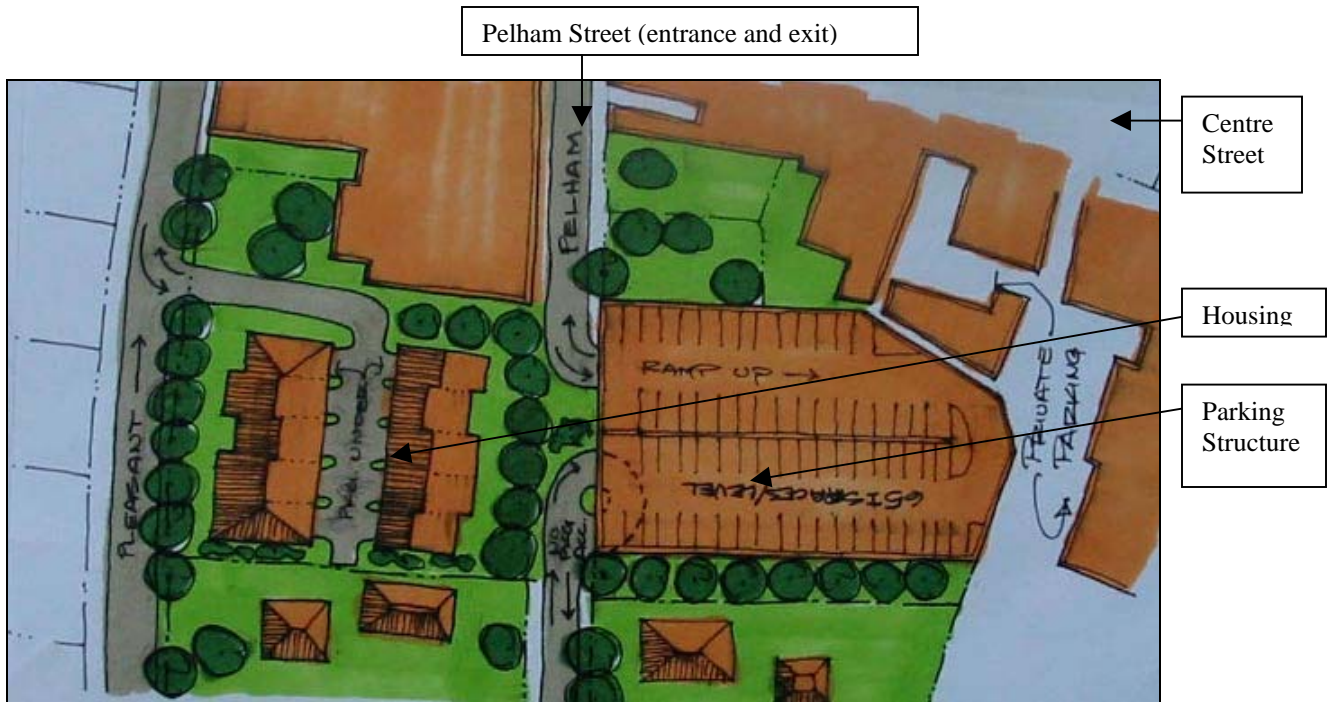
Pelham/Pleasant Street Parking:

A two-level structure spanning the public lots on the north and south side of Pelham Street could provide approximately 400 spaces which is an increase of 250 spaces over the existing surface parking. Special care must be taken to make sure that changes to use or configuration of these properties are sensitive to neighborhood interests. The westerly portion of Pelham Street could be a cul-de-sac or remain open as it currently is.



Possible Parking Ramp on City Owned Property Currently Used for Surface Parking

Alternatively, a parking structure could be built south of Pelham Street and the current surface parking north of Pelham Street could be used for housing. A structure of less than 30 feet in height south of Pelham Street could provide 200 to 250 spaces in 3-4 levels; placing one level underground would further decrease its scale. There is ample space to include a small landscape buffer adjacent to residential property. The westerly residential portion of the street could be returned to a two-way street with a cul-de-sac abutting the parking structure and guest parking for residences also could be provided at the turnaround or in a portion of the parking structure. Pedestrian access would be provided for residents. If parking is consolidated on the Pelham Street site, then the Pleasant Street lot could be converted to two-story housing units as a transition to the commercial area on Centre Street.



Possible Pelham Street Parking Structure and Housing

Centre Green Street Parking

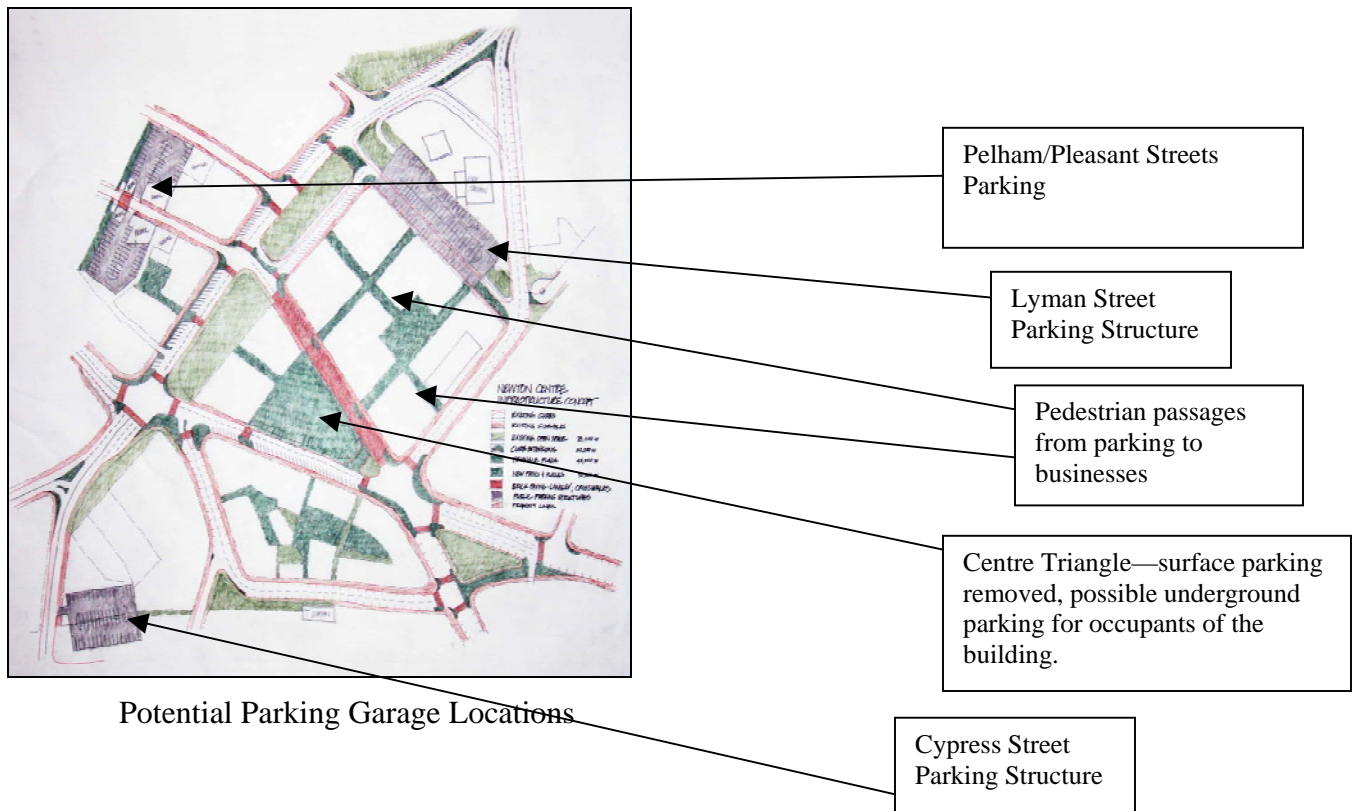
Centre Green Street and the adjacent open space has been considered as a possible place for providing underground parking. It is close to the shops, and would be convenient for both shoppers and employees. Disruption to the grounds would occur during construction under the green but would be restored to its original condition afterwards. Despite the fact that this land has been altered in the past, state and local laws protect this City Park with historic significance. Therefore, State and local approval would be required to pursue this option. A key question is whether the laws that apply to activities on the ground also preclude improvements beneath it, even if the land is restored to its original condition after construction. Another problem with this site is its size. It is probably not large enough to make an underground parking facility economically feasible.

Centre Triangle Underground Parking

Parking under the Centre Triangle is an option that has been discussed at length. There are considerable advantages to the site because of its proximity to shops and the proposed new public space above it. Because of its central location an underground garage would probably be used for short-term parking, although an underground site of several levels is not ideally suited for this purpose. It would continue to draw drivers looking for parking into the central area of Newton Centre. It is not certain, in view of unknown geologic conditions, how costly such a project would be. Approximately 90-95 spaces can be provided per floor on two floors, but due to space limitations access from the street would be difficult. Nevertheless, if the users of the Centre Triangle building want to build and pay for parking in the basement, that possibility could be considered.

Other locations

Additional parking is recommended in strategically-placed public facilities where the spaces can be shared. Parking structures that serve many uses reduce the overall need for individual businesses to provide parking and use available land more efficiency. City-owned lots and other public properties are especially appealing sites because they do not require acquisition costs and generally are already well situated for local parking needs. At the present time, there is demand for parking throughout the center, so distributing it evenly and/or providing structures where demand dictates is desirable. As properties become available, particularly in the eastern part of Newton Centre, the city should consider purchase of land for possible future parking.



Recommendations on Parking:

We believe that additional street parking can be created, some of it by relying on diagonal parking. However, it is unlikely that sufficient street parking adjacent to the business district can be obtained to replace all of the parking displaced from the Triangle, and to provide for growing needs as business and cultural activities in the Centre expand. We also want to reduce commercial/commuter parking in present residential areas. The objective is to concentrate short-term parking in the central areas and to provide adequate long-term parking in the periphery of the Newton Centre business area.

- Street parking spaces should be time limited to accommodate short-term parkers. Strict enforcement and substantial fines will assure turnover of these short-term spaces so that the ample parking will be available at all times.

- **Parking structures suitable for long-term parking will be required. Suitable locations for parking garages located on the periphery of the Centre are identified. All have advantages and disadvantages and all will require negotiations with public agencies and/or private property owners. Subsurface foundation and utility conditions will have to be evaluated.**
- **A location for parking on the eastern side of the Centre has not been identified. It is important for the City to monitor property uses and potential property sales in this area to acquire land if it should become available for a future parking site. It may also be possible to work with existing owners to develop a parking structure as part of the redevelopment of the owners' property.**

Our Groups suggest the construction of two parking structures on the periphery of the Centre. Such structures could be managed professionally and supervised by a newly created Parking and Traffic Advisory Group.

A number of alternative sites for a parking structure have been considered. In the short run, the most feasible sites are on Lyman Street, Pelham Street and on Cypress Street next to or partially over the MBTA tracks.

Present Newton regulations, which require on-site parking, limit what can be built in Newton Centre. These regulations need to be changed to permit arrangements for off-site parking. Shared use of parking spaces between groups with different time schedules also needs to be encouraged.

VIII. TRAFFIC

Newton Centre is located at the crossroads of two major roads and an MBTA Station. The roads have historically served to bring citizens to Newton Centre and as direct routes to surrounding communities. There is no alternative to this historic role but mitigating its negative impacts is possible. The confluence of through and local traffic contributes to major backups at intersections and makes it difficult and hazardous for pedestrians to walk from one business block to another. Congestion and wait-time at intersections in Newton Centre encourage drivers to bypass these intersections whenever possible, creating “cut-through” traffic in the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

While it may not be possible to reduce the volume of through-traffic, rerouting of traffic, rationalized parking, improved signaling, selective lane additions, pedestrian crossings, signage, and the creation of roundabouts may make the volume of traffic less burdensome and may improve the safety and comfort of pedestrian circulation.



Newton Center Today: Traffic blockage on Beacon Street

We support a comprehensive study of the efficacy of using roundabouts at the two major Beacon Street intersections in Newton Centre to calm traffic but keep it moving. In addition, if roundabouts are not feasible or possibly in addition to these measures, Group Two and Three examined other traffic options.

Possible Round About in Newton Centre



Other possible changes to calm traffic

Numerous other possibilities to smooth the flow of traffic can be implemented. Many of these possibilities are listed here:

- Changing direction of some one-way streets, for example, Langley Road between Sumner and Centre and Sumner Street between Lyman Street and Beacon Street. Review of traffic circulation revealed that fire engines heading south from the station on Willow Street typically circle the block and go down Langley Road. If Lyman were to become a one-way street to accommodate more parking, the streets could allow circulation in a single direction and good access to all points along the way.
- Bulb-outs and an elevated crosswalk on Beacon Street next to the driveway at the Post Office; bulb-outs or a mini roundabout at Gibbs Street
- Landscaped boulevard for pedestrians to stop in mid street and to visually narrow the lanes of travel on Centre Street between Beacon Street and Sumner Street
- Change paving material on crosswalks at roundabouts on Beacon Street at Langley and Centre Street
- Raised mid-block crosswalk and planters or decorative fencing along the Centre Triangle to direct foot traffic across Langley Road
- Elimination of the merger of Centre and Cypress Streets by 1) separating the two streets with a landscaped median from the point of merger to the proposed roundabout at Beacon/Centre Streets; 2) installing a traffic signal where Cypress and Centre streets converge; or 3) installing a mini-roundabout
- Live parking only on Union Street in front of the MBTA stop from 4:30 – 6:30 pm to reduce double parking and encourage drop off at the “T”. Live parking on Braeland Avenue adjacent to the MBTA from 4:30 – 6:30 to reduce demands for drop-off and pick-up on Union Street
- Long-term meters on Braeland Avenue to encourage merchant use of spaces and free spaces on Union Street so customers don’t need to circulate as much to find parking.
- Additional traffic signals and/or improved signal timing.



Curb bulb-out for traffic calming

Recommendations on Traffic: Our Groups suggest:

- **Additional professional traffic studies to analyze how traffic flow can be smoothed, how pedestrian crossings can be made easier and how traffic can be kept out of the adjacent residential areas.**
- **Further consideration of the construction of roundabouts at the intersection of Beacon and Centre Streets, and at the intersection of Beacon Street, Sumner Street, and Langley Road.**
- **The removal of surface parking from the Centre Triangle to reduce traffic congestion and smooth traffic flow in the central area of the village.**
- **Additional one-way streets, mid block pedestrian crosswalks, landscaped medians in Centre and Beacon Streets, and traffic-smoothing devices.**

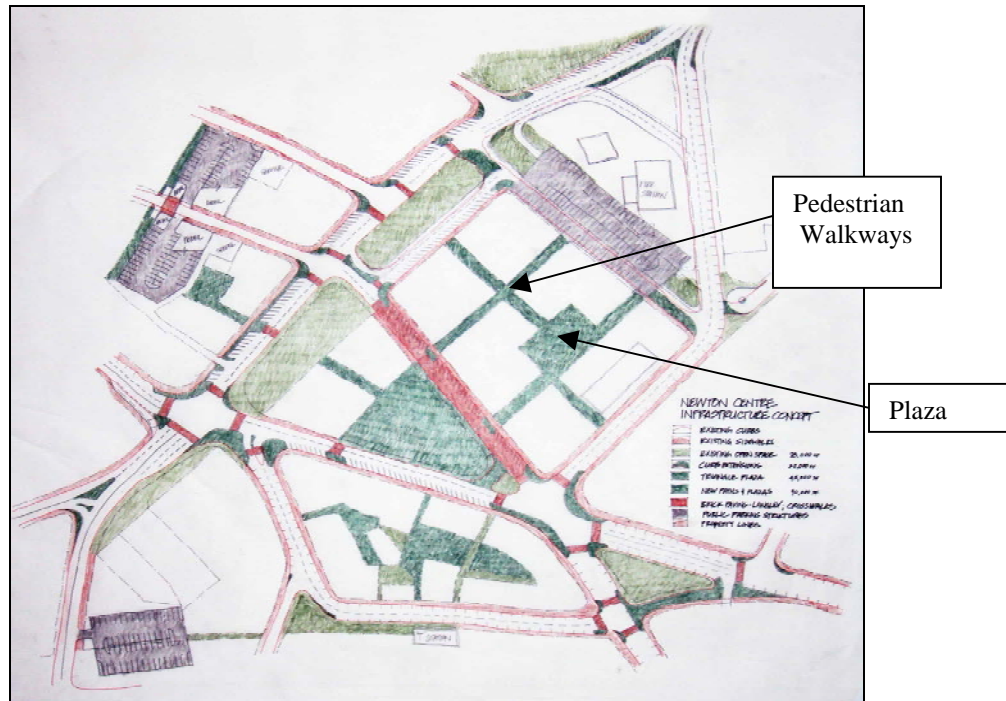
IX. PEDESTRIAN PASSAGEWAYS

In addition to improved traffic, pedestrian passageways are needed to improve Newton Centre’s “connectivity”.

There are two large blocks in the Centre--the block bounded by Langley Road, Sumner, Lyman and Centre Streets and the block bounded by Beacon, Herrick, Union Streets and Langley Road. Public paths through these blocks are needed to enable pedestrians to go conveniently from place to place, and, in particular, to walk from the T station to the Langley/Lyman block, and walk from the future Lyman parking facility to the shops surrounding the Triangle.

These pathways would also provide additional frontage for residences over shops and restaurants, along passages and around courtyards adding to the retail inventory and variety that will improve Newton Centre as an attractive place to shop and dine. These locations will also begin to replace retail store square footage lost to other uses and will increase the supply of available space suitable for small businesses. The pictures below show some possibilities for the pedestrian paths and plazas.





Possible Pedestrian Passageways

Recommendations on Pedestrian Passageways and Plazas

Our Groups recommends that efforts be made to provide pedestrian paths and plazas as part of the infill construction in the central blocks of Newton Center. This will call for incentives for private developers under the proposed overlay zoning district. A bonus plan allowing additional construction for the creation of open space suitable for pedestrian use should be considered. Changes in parking requirements allowing offsite parking should also be considered.

X. HOUSING

Objectives:

Newton Centre's location, history, and potential make it appropriate for "smart growth" residential development. Newton Centre is a close-in suburb near the heart of Boston with convenient access to the "T", numerous bus routes, and north-south and east-west highways. It has the potential to once again become an integrated residential/commercial village center. To take advantage of these opportunities will mean adding multi-story buildings with residences over retail, as well as low-rise multifamily housing in transition areas. Creating more housing can fill several demographic, environmental, and vitality needs to enhance the entire neighborhood. Other recent studies also speak about increasing diversity, walkability, and cohesiveness. Newton's Comprehensive Plan, approved by the Board of Aldermen in November 2007, suggests that the city reverse the zoning rules that presently impose restrictions on residential uses in the centers and other business areas, at the same time assuring that concerns with regard to traffic, parking, and affordability are carefully addressed.

In earlier days, Newton Centre had considerable housing above ground-level retail stores. Over the years, housing has been converted to office space or torn down. Today, Newton Centre lacks housing options. The growing population of older “empty nesters” and younger apartment seekers has increasingly been forced to look for housing in other parts of Newton or elsewhere. Developers have been creating condos and rental apartments on Route 9, Needham Street, and elsewhere, but there's a missing element, namely housing for those who desire to live right in the heart of the community with its conveniences and vitality. When people live near the various services they want (food, entertainment, banks, clothes, cleaners, for example), they are less dependent on cars, their environmental impact is less. They become more socially integrated as individuals. There are more people onto the sidewalks; they provide customers for the businesses and "eyes on" safety to the area.

Newton Centre with shops and public transportation will make a good residential center. Adding residents would enliven the Centre, improve business and encourage greater use of its highly accessible public transportation. New housing will help to meet goals of diversity, affordability and reduced reliance on fossil fuels. Moderately greater residential density will help to meet Newton's goals for affordable housing with minimal impact on village scale.

Newton Centre is particularly suitable for condominium and apartment housing, as it is one of the few places in the City where one can live without owning a car. In this connection, the City should seriously plan establishing Newton Centre as a “Smart Growth” zoning district so that the City, like 30 other Massachusetts cities and towns, can receive state incentive payments for a mixed income residential development.

What Is Preventing Change?

Newton's city zoning regulations date from the 1920's and 1940's and supported what the public wanted at that time. Then, having a modern single home with a yard was preferred. Older multi-family buildings (such as those in Newton Centre) reminded people of depression and war struggles. Energy was cheap and shopping by car to one-story shopping centers with lots of parking places were the preferred land-use model. Today, with two-worker households, increased traffic, and environmental awareness, we have changed our image of the future -- less urban sprawl and wasteful consumption. Building height restrictions in Newton were and still are 24 feet, with the thought of ground-floor shops and second storey dentists and other offices. Parking is required “on-site” even if building sites are too small to accommodate parking.

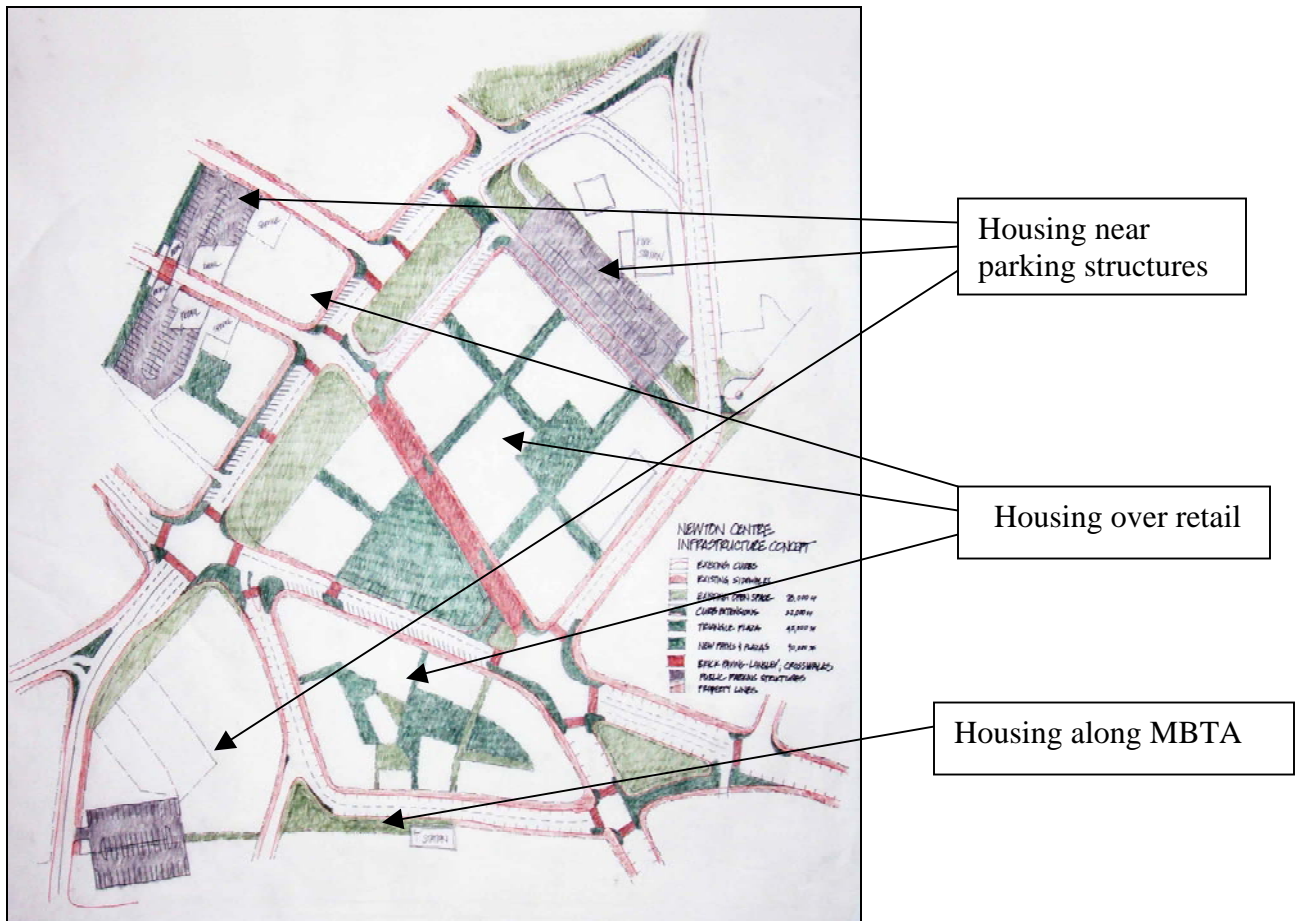
While housing is allowed under current zoning regulations, height and parking restrictions mean that owners have little incentive to upgrade their properties or to build moderate scale residential buildings in Newton Centre core business area. Securing special permits is costly. Yet, today's urban planning suggests the need for a moderately higher scale, integrating multi-family housing with locally-oriented business. This would also serve to meet growing housing needs of populations that are now badly served— young people, seniors—and would help to meet affordable housing target.

Housing Potentials in Newton Centre

A number of areas in the Centre are well-suited for the construction of housing. While it would be unrealistic to replace offices with housing, residential space can be created in low rise ground level sites, above commercial business, and above parking facilities. The scale of these buildings should be moderate, varying from up to 60 feet in the central areas and somewhat lower scale adjacent to existing residential blocks.

Potential sites shown on the map below are:

- Above ground floor business in newly constructed structures on the Langley of Street block
- Over business along Center and Beacon Streets
- In association with parking structures on Cypress Street or along Lyman Street and the Fire Station block.
- Along the MBTA (or over the tracks) on Union Street (a row of town houses)
- In the present location of parking between Pleasant and Pelham Streets.



Potential Location for Housing



Housing over Retail



Housing on an Interior Plaza

Additional housing in Newton Centre’s business area would be advantageous from an economic and fiscal perspective. It would provide opportunities for improving the utilization of space in the business area. It would add local business activity. Since the likely occupants of apartments or condos are young adults or empty nesters, both without school age children, the housing will bring in more tax revenue than fiscal expenditures.

Newton’s Comprehensive Plan, approved by the Board of Aldermen in November, 2007, suggests that the City refine the zoning rules that presently impose restrictions on residential uses and village centers and other business areas, at the same time assuring that concerns with regard to traffic, parking, and affordability are carefully addressed.

In May, 2008, The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (of which the City of Newton is a voting member) adopted a long-term regional growth plan for eastern Massachusetts which forecasts 350,000 new households by 2030. This plan, known as MetroFuture envisioned sustainable growth, where these new households are targeted towards infill village center locations with easy access to public transit. From both a physical and environmental perspective this approach is far preferable to uncontrolled sprawl, which results in loss of green space, increased infrastructure costs, longer commutes and water runoff problems. Additional housing in Newton Centre is in full alignment with this

regional plan which is also strongly supported by state initiatives such as the 40R and 40S Smart Growth housing programs.

Recommendations on Housing

Our Groups suggest adherence to the Comprehensive Plan’s long-term goal of up to 150 additional housing units created by the private sector and satisfying demographic needs of young and older residents. Studies of site use in Newton Centre suggest that there is room for additional housing without creating excessive density. The plan should encourage new construction for residential above ground floor commercial or parking facilities. We urge clarifying the permit process and providing more flexible ways for property owners to meet building height and tenant parking requirements.

As the Newton Comprehensive Plan states:

“Residential development that is well located in relationship to schools, commercial services, large employers and existing patterns of residential type and character benefit the City in multiple ways...Housing retained or developed in or near village centers supports village businesses, and having a broad array of village services within walking distance benefits residents. That linkage strengthens the vitality and quality of life for the (entire) area.”

XI. DESIGN GUIDELINES

Our Groups suggest Design Guidelines for the Public as well as the Private Realm. This document outlines improvements to public property -- such as streets, sidewalks, and parks -- that should be initiated by public agencies to enhance the pedestrian experience in Newton Centre. However, we also strongly believe that these public improvements will spur improvements to private property as well. Since the individual property owners (or a group of owners working together) must do the work on their own property, it is equally important to outline Design Guidelines for the Private Realm.

In Newton Centre today, there is not one central architectural theme. Building heights, construction materials, façade treatments and private signage vary greatly. This eclectic character can provide for a visually pleasing and interesting streetscape. Design Guidelines need not discourage this variety, but can foster it. Identical buildings and façades would make the Centre look drab and boring -- similar to a generic strip mall rather than the diverse commercial center it should be. Instead, Design Guidelines can and should give private property owners ample leeway to creatively design buildings and façades that contribute to the overall vibrancy and attractiveness of the Newton Centre streetscape.

Sidewalk widths, light fixtures, site elements, and landscape treatments also vary greatly throughout the Centre. In many locations, on-street facilities are poor and maintenance has been inadequate. While we propose the need for attractive design guidelines, we do not suggest adherence to a particular style. However, we visualize requiring the use of high quality materials and conformance to the latest design standards. The streetscape should be attractive, suited to safe and convenient pedestrian passage, with wider

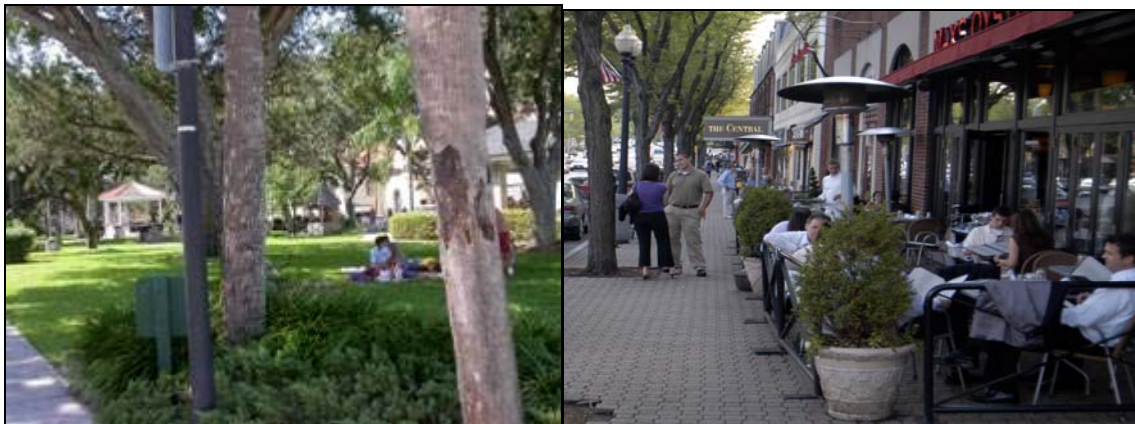
sidewalks, underground utilities, and improved lighting. Design standards should conform to the latest proposals for efficient energy use.

Potential Design Guidelines

The Subcommittee on Design Guidelines considered a broad range of possibilities with regard to design guidelines for Newton Centre. These are intended to assure that public and private improvements conform to the most advanced, highest quality standards.

General guidelines to be followed throughout Newton Centre are vital to contribute to the creation of an interesting and pedestrian-friendly streetscape in Newton Centre. For example, a uniform setback from the street encourages pedestrians to easily walk along the sidewalks peering into shop windows and to stop when something catches their eye. Courtyards filled with plantings, furniture and adequate lighting, tucked behind or between buildings provide a pleasant respite for visitors to the Centre. These areas would pleasantly compliment the public parks and open spaces in the Triangle and along Centre Street.

The purpose of these guidelines (a possible draft for Newton Centre is included in the appendix) is to encourage building designs that are compatible with each other and their surrounding environment. Among the issues that should be addressed in the Guidelines are the site plan or where the building is located on the lot, minimum and maximum building heights, façade treatments, and signage.



Suitable Outdoor Spaces

The Design Guidelines focus on:

Streets and Sidewalks: Well-designed streets and sidewalks are vital to the success of Newton Centre. While it is important to preserve ease of vehicular movement, particularly along Beacon and Centre Streets, Newton Centre is also a destination point and the heart of a residential community. It should be a place where people feel they can easily walk between businesses, parks and shops. Street and sidewalk design should support the objective of making a pedestrian-oriented environment. Roads, particularly the wide Centre and Beacon Streets, should be safe and easy to cross.

Buildings: The streetscape is defined by the buildings that frame it. The types of building materials used and the way they are detailed will enhance the appearance of the architecture and the pedestrian experience. Facade treatments, dormered windows and/or recessed upper stories often make a large building appear less massive at the street level. Buildings should be compatible throughout the Centre, but need not be of the same design, the same height, nor constructed with identical materials.

A new building on the Triangle should be designed to be an icon for the new Newton Centre and a source of pride and excitement for Newton Centre’s residents. As such, the building must be carefully designed with a high level of quality materials, proportion, and timelessness. A predominance of glass would express an airy, transparent, contemporary, and inviting image, while anchors of masonry would recognize its solidly-crafted neighbors and pay deserved homage to the former Mason School. A design competition may be an appropriate first step for development of the Centre Triangle.

Pedestrian Walkways and Alleys: Pedestrian walkways and alleys provide smaller scale routes for pedestrians to navigate the Centre. They should be well lit, safe, and pleasant.

Lighting and signage: In addition to providing security, decorative light fixtures and signage help to establish the character of Newton Centre.

Street Trees: Street trees enrich the appearance and health of an urban environment. Trees shade the streets, sidewalks and buildings, mediate the scale between taller buildings and pedestrians, reduce noise and pollution, and provide shelter for pedestrians.



Design Features

Recommendation on Design

Our Groups seeks the highest design qualities on private and public properties redeveloped in Newton Centre. All aspects of design must be considered. The design guidelines must be integrated with the zoning overlay district. A design competition may be appropriate to ensure that the centre triangle will fulfill its possibilities.

XII. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Numerous groups in Newton support improvement in environmental sustainability, efforts to manage development and new construction in ways that will reduce our impact on the environment. The Subcommittee on Environmental Sustainability has proposed a detailed plan of incentives to persuade developers to increase the use of environmentally friendly development. (See the report in the Appendix). While it is not the direct purpose of the proposals to renovate Newton Centre to improve the global environment, there is broad agreement that growth in Newton Centre should be consistent with modern environmental guidelines.

Our Groups support the existing national code named Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Although LEED was created in pursuit of a noble goal that we share, it is extremely complicated and provides no incentives beyond formal recognition of expensive efforts. Rather than awarding potential developers abstract LEED certifications, we wanted to entice them with the prospect of building larger structures and thus making greater profits in exchange for building energy efficient structures.

Also, we kept in mind that small and medium size construction companies and home owners cannot afford LEED certifications even if they wanted to build energy efficient structures. In order to allow them to do that, we wish to extend these guidelines to all new construction within Newton Centre Revitalization project and, consequently, use them as a prototype for the entire city of Newton.

Existing Conditions:

From the environmental point of view Newton Centre presents the following challenges:

- Most of the existing structures are energy inefficient and create air pollution;
- The existing parking lots don't have enough greenery and create large heat islands;
- Most of the flat roofs have obsolete materials and don't reflect enough solar energy back into atmosphere thus contributing to the heat island effect;
- The area has too much of impervious surface that creates large amount of run-off water which taxes the city's storm sewage system and does not recharge the water table.

Goals:

In order to fulfill our task of creating a vibrant urban habitat in the village of Newton Centre we must amend the current zoning to allow greater density within the designated

boundaries. In order to achieve this goal we will present the Board of Aldermen with a viable solution to the current environmental, economic, social and aesthetic problems of the area. The following proposal concentrates on the environmental issues of that task.

Means:

Encourage sustainable development and sound environmentally practice in Newton Zoning Ordinance. This action will support of the principles of sustainable architecture advocated by the State of Massachusetts, the Green Decade Coalition of Newton, the Newton Conservators and the community of Newton at large. We propose the following:

- Saving and creating open space while accommodating a greater density of new development;
- Reducing energy consumption of each structure;
- Reducing life cycle cost of each structure;
- Incorporating the best practices of new building technology;
- Creating FAR (Floor Area Ratio) incentives for applicants who fulfill the following criteria.

Criteria:

All new construction in Newton Centre shall incorporate, wherever possible, the following basic design principles:

- Orienting a structure's envelope in accordance with the sun and prevailing wind.
- Maximizing a structure's volume to surface ratio.
- Maximizing on-site greenery and open space.
- Active use of solar and wind energy.
- Passive use of solar and wind energy.
- Active use of geo-thermal energy.
- Use of energy efficient heating and lighting.
- Collection of rain water for reuse;
- Use of water saving appliances.

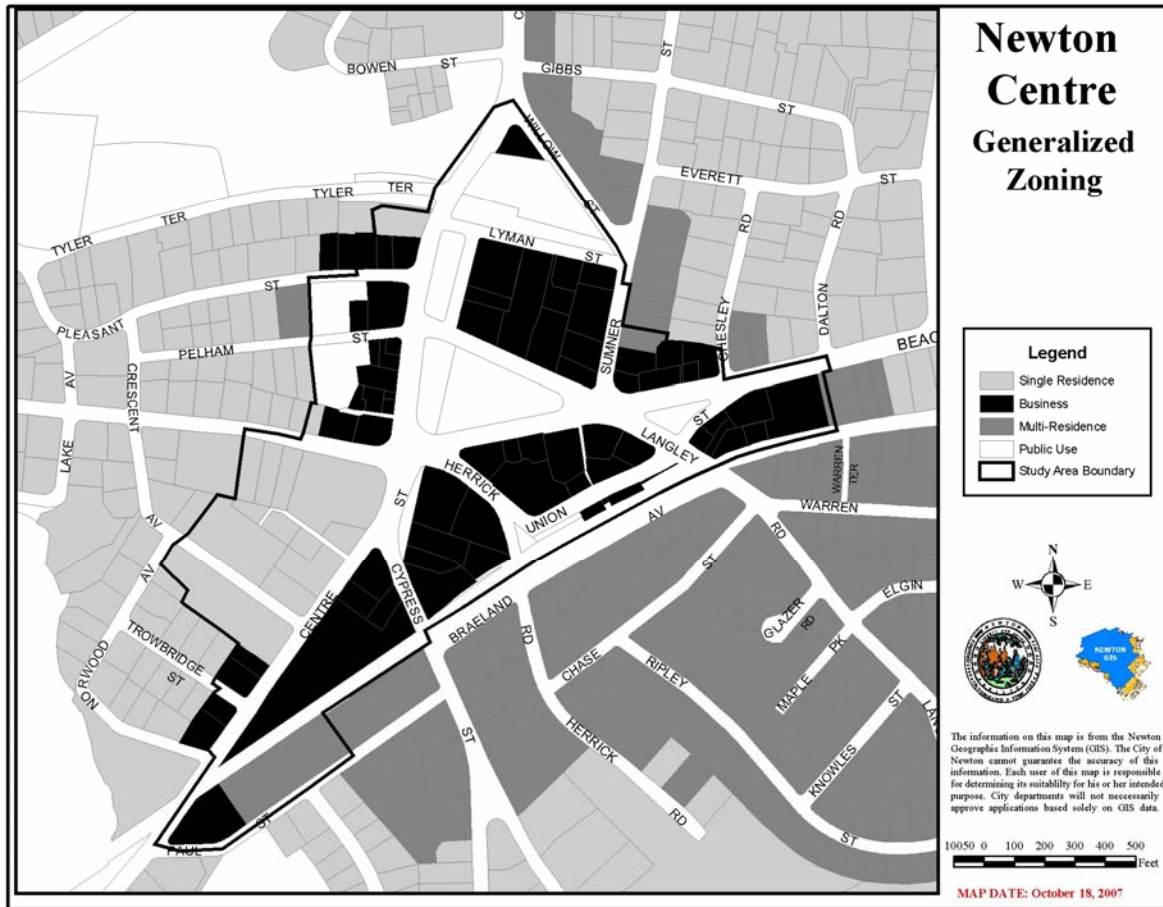
Recommendation on Environmental Sustainability:

We support sustainable environment goals and recommend that measures advancing such objectives be included in the Newton Centre redevelopment effort.

XIII. ZONING AND OVERLAY DISTRICT

Many of the recommendations made earlier in this report can be implemented through the adoption of a Zoning Overlay District. Creating such a zone is one of the items in the Comprehensive Plan's Economic Development Action Program (Comprehensive Plan, pages 6-7).

Currently the underlying zone for the commercial area discussed in this report is either Business 1 or Business 2 (see zoning map below). We do not recommend changing this underlying zone, but would instead establish an overlay on top of the existing zoning. In some cases the overlay zone may be more restrictive than the underlying zone (i.e. allowing banks or offices only on stories above ground level), in others more liberal (i.e. reducing setback requirements). An overlay district could serve a number of purposes:



- Provide a plan tailored specifically to Newton Centre: one size does not fit all. Allow for more development density surrounding the Triangle and less development density on the peripheral blocks adjacent to existing single-family homes.
- Allow for multifamily housing close to rail transit, shops and services, public open space, and social and cultural activities of the community.
- Expand the quantity and increase the variety of retail shops, services, and restaurants.
- Improve the design quality of commercial and residential buildings and related open spaces.
- Reflect and enhance the scale of the historic buildings in Newton Centre.
- Manage parking so that the efficiency of space utilization is maximized, with the most convenient parking available to high-turnover shoppers and visitors, with lower-turnover, employee, commuter, and resident parking in peripheral locations.
- Foster development that improves the long-term fiscal health the City.
- Allow for DIF and smart growth financing.

Conventional *Use-Based* zoning codes regulate which uses are allowed where and have been utilized throughout the country since the early 20th century. Zoning restrictions were initially put in place to separate sometimes-noxious commercial uses from housing and other types of uses. In suburban communities times have changed and the population has grown.

Form-Based zoning codes are a relatively new concept which addresses the relationship between building facades and public space, the form and mass of buildings in relation to each other and the scale and types of streets and blocks. It can regulate development at the individual building scale and often reflects a diversity of architecture, materials, uses and ownership operating within a communal vision and legal framework. Form-based code is presented in diagrams and text. A regulatory plan that designates the appropriate form and scale of development rather than only the land use types is in contrast to the focus of conventional zoning on permissible property uses and control of development through numerical parameters such as FAR, height limits, setbacks and parking ratios.

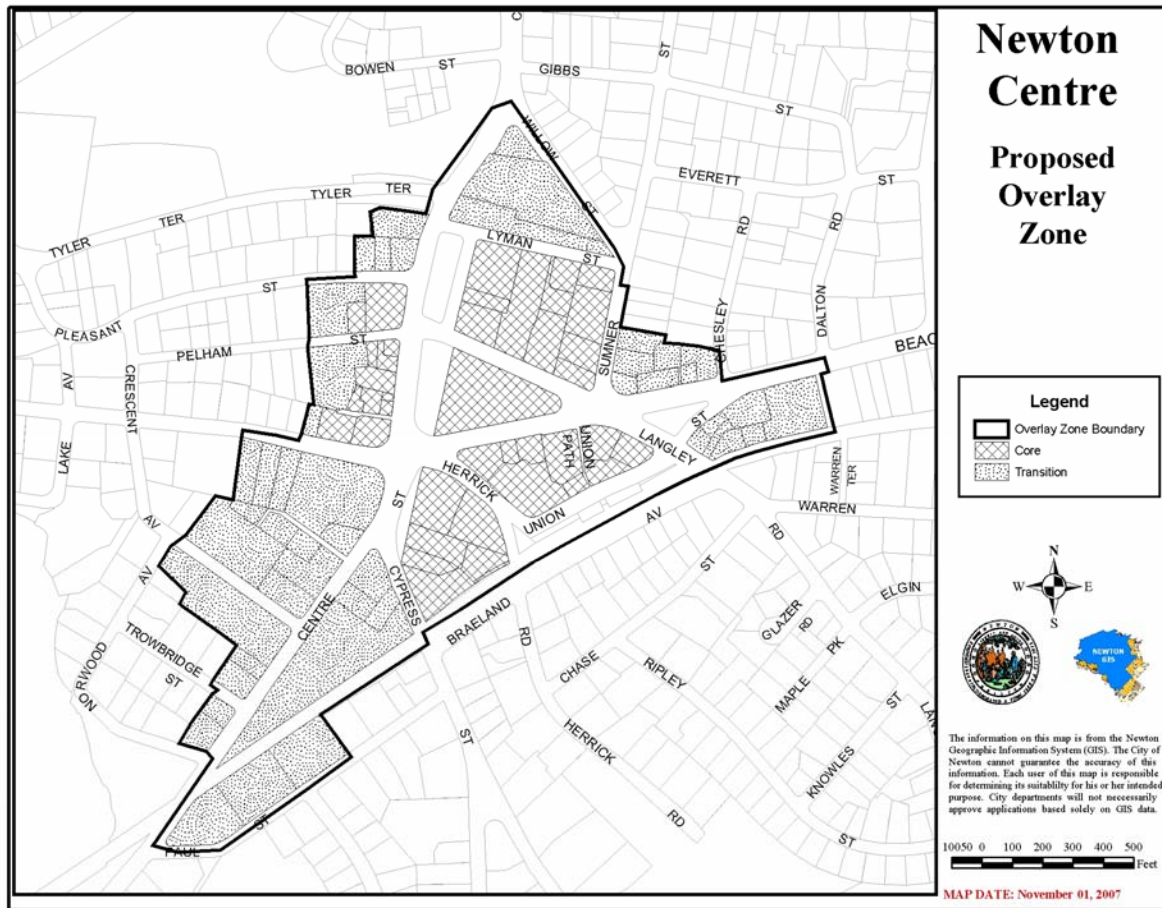
A Newton Centre overlay zone could be a hybrid which includes:

1. Regulating plan or map of the area designating where different building form standards apply
2. Building form standards that regulate the features and functions of buildings.
3. Public space and street standards with specifications for the sidewalks, travel lanes, street trees, benches, etc.
4. Architectural standards which control external architectural materials and quality.
5. A list of uses allowed by-right and by special permit including where these uses may be located.
6. Parking requirements that allow for shared parking on private properties and public facilities.
7. Administration that includes a clearly defined application and project review process.
8. Annotations and definitions to explain the use of technical terms and intention of specific code provisions.

We need zoning that permits mixed use in Newton Centre. An Overlay District would allow us to establish a regulatory plan that designates the appropriate form and scale of by-right development within the Centre. This would allow Newton Centre to achieve the type of development desired. Past experience suggests that the need for special permits has been a barrier to such development. The Overlay District should provide clear guidelines for by-right mixed-use development by property owners. In addition, an overlay District is a requirement for obtaining financing under the DIF and 40R smart growth programs (see Financing Section).

In general, the proposed overlay would include the business areas of the Centre and would divide the area into a Core area, and a Transition area. The core area would encompass property adjacent to the Centre Triangle and furthest away from the existing residential neighborhoods. The Transition area would be designated as the land between the Core and the neighborhoods. Allowable development in the Transition areas should

be less intense than that permitted in the Core in order to provide a buffer for the existing residents. A map of the proposed overlay is shown below.



Zoning Overlay District

Provisions of an Overlay Zone

A sample of an Overlay Zone for Newton Centre, including a comparison of existing and proposed permitted uses and dimensional standards, is included in the Appendix. The following discussion presents some additional possibilities for specifications in an overlay zone.

Land Use

In the core area, to utilize the provisions of the Overlay District, the ground floor of the building must be occupied by pedestrian-oriented, shopping-related land uses including the following:

- Retail shops, cafes, and restaurants
- Residential lobbies, including mailboxes, providing access to upper floor residences.
- Entrances to other business and service establishments and residences located above or below ground level.

In order to better use ground floor space, non-retail uses such as banks, financial offices, medical and dental offices, health clubs, travel agencies, storage facilities, hair and nail salons and spas, and residential uses would be excluded from ground floor locations under the Overlay District provisions. These uses may occupy second floor or basement space, with direct access from a ground floor lobby.

In the transition areas, buildings may have residential use on the ground floor.

Parking

It is important to recognize that Newton Centre is a prime location for transit-oriented development. Fewer parking spaces may be necessary than in parts of the City with no access to public transportation. Our Groups looked at two options to calculate that reduced number.

For example, the first option simply sets new ratios for parking spaces based on land use:

- Residential parking – 1 space per residential unit.
- Retail parking – 1 space per 400 net square feet of retail area
- Restaurant parking – 1 space per four seats
- Office parking – 1 space per 500 net square feet of office area

Another proposal we considered was to reduce the current parking requirement by 35% because the 2000 U.S. Census shows that only 65% of Newton Centre's visitors arrive by car.

We advocate allowing parking spaces to be provided in one of three ways:

- 1) On site
- 2) In common with adjoining properties
- 3) By payment to a City parking fund toward construction of municipally owned public parking facilities in Newton Centre. Payment per space is to be determined by estimates of current construction costs for parking spaces meeting City design criteria.

Building and Site Design

The Private Sector Design Guidelines (sample guidelines in the appendix) should be adopted as part of the Overlay Zone. Private property owners, who would like to take

advantage of the increased density that would be allowed by-right under the overlay, would need to design their projects to follow these guidelines. These guidelines give property owners a range of options for their buildings while ensuring compatibility among all properties in the Centre.

Minimum Lot Sizes and FAR

In an effort to improve the utilization of land, whose ownership is fragmented at this time, minimum project lot sizes are suggested, particularly in the Core area. This may require several owners to undertake joint development projects more suited to the site than small individual buildings. The overlay zone may also include incentives, perhaps an increase in the allowable density (as measured by Floor Area Ratio (FAR)) for development that exceed the requirements in the areas of sustainable architecture and affordable housing or that include a parking facility that is either deeded to the City of available for public use.

Recommendations on Zoning

We support the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations to adopt a zoning Overlay District. We do not recommend changing the underlying Zoning. Rather the Aldermen should approve an Overlay District on top of the existing zoning. The overlay zone should be designed to allow mixed-use structures by-right within specified design guidelines. These guidelines should distinguish between a Core District and a Transitional District.

We believe that Private Sector Design Guidelines should be included in the Overlay Zone to guide appropriate development in the Centre.

XIV. ECONOMICS AND FINANCING

Our objectives are primarily to improve life in Newton Centre and to create a more lively and integrated environment. Economic considerations must influence this project in that it must demonstrate the ability to fund and carry itself. The renovation of the Centre promises to yield substantial economic benefits to local businesses and to the community at large. Substantial costs are involved; however, we estimate that the project will be self-supporting, and that in the long run, it will provide substantial net financial benefit to both to the Newton Centre community and to the entire City of Newton.

Public Expenditures

Capital investment and maintenance requirements to carry out the improvements envisioned for Newton Centre will incur substantial public sector cost. Estimated costs of public improvements to roads, sidewalks, and other public facilities (excluding parking structures) are \$8-10 million. Costs involved in connection with improvements on the Center Triangle--the building, gathering spaces, pedestrian walks, landscaping and fountain will be covered eventually by rents paid by private tenants of the Centre Triangle building. Parking structures are assumed to be self-financing with the parking authority allowed to issue bonds.

In view of the City's difficult financial situation, the revitalization of Newton Centre must be financed without increasing the City's debt burden. As we indicate below, expenditures incurred for the planned public improvements in Newton Centre can be funded from a range of public, private, and non-profit sources.

Potential Sources of Public Financing

1. District Improvement Financing (DIF)

DIF financing is a State of Massachusetts financing program that allows municipalities to borrow funds on the basis of the anticipated increase in taxes resulting from the increased value of newly constructed and redeveloped properties. It can serve as the central financial source that could yield significant dollars for public improvements in Newton Centre. DIF is predicated on a zoning overlay that would permit/encourage greater density and growth in the tax base. The City would define a development district in Newton Centre and would detail the projected improvements. Once the Massachusetts Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) approves the program, the City of Newton would be permitted to finance the public improvements in the DIF District with bonds that are serviced from the anticipated incremental property taxes generated by the improvements in the district. DIF debt is not counted towards the City's municipal debt limit.

Assuming the construction of 150 apartments and 140,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, an increase in tax revenues of approximately \$1.5 million per year can be anticipated. This could support bond issues under the DIF program of some \$15 million (assuming 20-year level amortization).

2. Chapter 40R and 40S (Smart Growth Zoning District):

The proximity of public transportation makes Newton Centre an ideal location for "smart growth" zoning. Provided that a municipality adopts a smart growth zoning district which meets certain requirements, it can apply to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a variety of zoning incentive payments. Under Chapter 40R, incentive payments are made for every by-right unit of housing built over the number allowed in the underlying zoning. A payment of \$200,000 could be received on the basis of planned 150 units of housing plus \$3,000 for each affordable unit built.

Municipalities that incur additional school costs as a result of school children living in new housing within smart growth (40R) zoning districts, may receive additional recurring state funds under Chapter 40S to partially cover these costs.

3. State and Federal Grants including Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Funds

There are a variety of programs/agencies under the Commonwealth Capital Programs, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Transportation that may provide either targeted or general funds for planning the revitalization of Newton Centre. These

funds could support mixed income housing, transportation-related infrastructure, and other grant and loan purposes.

4. Funding of the Parking Facilities:

Our Groups propose the construction of parking structures. Parking structures, which currently cost approximately \$20,000 per space, would require capital investment in excess of \$10 million. Parking structures should be self-supporting. A Parking Authority could issue bonds that would be serviced by parking revenues.

Potential sources of capital and recurring revenues to help finance such improvements include:

- Incremental parking revenues based on increased capacity/utilization of spaces
- Adjusting parking charges to encourage efficient 24-hour use of spaces
- Fees paid by property owners in lieu of providing parking on site
- Rental income from ground floor retail or sale of attached condominium housing.

5. Foundations/Private Donors

A wide array of private foundations, non-profit institutions, and quasi-governmental organizations provide planning and construction funds for downtown revitalizations. For example, the All Newton Music School has previously indicated that it would explore the possibility of relocating into the Newton Centre Triangle building and participating in its funding.

6. Business Improvement District

Subject to municipal approval and support of owners of at least 60% of the property and at least 51% of the assessed value within a proposed business district, Chapter 400 of Massachusetts State Law permits the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID). All property owners within a BID would be assessed a fee not to exceed 0.5% of assessed value. Payment of this fee is voluntary (however the BID requires the minimum 60% levels of support in order to function).

Based on current assessed values and assuming a 70% support level, a Newton Centre BID would generate \$350,000-400,000 per year. Over time, this figure could be significantly higher if one adds the assessed value of improvements that would result from a revitalization of Newton Centre. Funds can be authorized to engage in a wide variety of activities, including capital improvements, maintenance, marketing and promotion. A Newton Centre BID would not only be an important source of funding, particularly for maintenance and for street improvements, but could also provide ongoing resources to recruit desirable retail tenants and organize special events and activities.

7. CPA Funding

Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds can be used for acquisition and creation of public open space and affordable community housing. Funding may be sought for various aspects of Newton Centre reconstruction, particularly in connection with design and

landscaping of the Centre Triangle as recreational space and development of community housing.

8. City Public Works Funding

The City spends substantial money each year on street infrastructure maintenance. Some of the highway and pedestrian improvements planned for the Centre could be fitted into the road maintenance schedule and carried out as part of the Department of Public Works operations.

9. Private Investment

Comprehensive planning for appropriate private development calls for cooperative efforts by private and public developers. Nevertheless, private parties, who will be able to construct mixed-use buildings containing apartments and commercial space under modified zoning regulations, will carry out much of the development we envision for Newton Centre. Private sector development will be justified by the economic gains to the property owners from better use of their properties—mixed use, off-site parking, moderately higher buildings, pedestrian walks, parking garages, etc. Increased pedestrian use of the Centre will also benefit local businesses and provide substantial employment opportunities.

Prediction of the potential development of properties in Newton Centre under an Overlay Zoning District calls for professional engineering and architectural studies.

Recommendations on Economics and Financing

Our Groups suggest that a variety of sources of capital be explored and utilized, private as well as public. Some of these sources, like the proposed BID district will provide only modest sums and may help to provide improved maintenance and landscaping. Other sources, like capital raised by a Parking Authority and funds raised through a DIF program will cover substantial public capital expenditures.

It is anticipated that much of the redevelopment effort in Newton Center will be carried out privately with private financing. An important role of the public sector will be to provide guidelines and incentives so that private financing will be invested in Newton Centre.

Our Groups also suggest that professional studies be conducted regarding prospects for growth, tax revenues, and increased costs associated with the rebuilding and revitalization of Newton Centre. Preliminary studies, conducted by members of the committee, suggest that increases in tax revenues could amount to approximately \$1.5 million per year. Such increased tax potential will support a substantial DIF program that will pay for all of the public improvements, other than the parking structures, which will be financed by self-supporting bonds issued by a parking authority.

XV. MITIGATION

Any discussion of the revitalization of Newton Centre must acknowledge the potential impact on Newton Centre's merchants, shoppers, and on residents of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Gains in improved physical facilities in Newton Centre will inevitably come at the cost of temporary disruptions to people living and doing business there now. A revitalization plan for the Centre without mitigating potential adverse impacts during construction does not serve all the citizens of Newton.

Although any type of change to the existing Newton Centre will impact the *status quo* to some degree, measures can be taken to smooth the transition. Careful advance planning can minimize the disruptive impact of construction on businesses and on the residential neighborhoods that surround the Newton Centre business area.

Provision for parking and for traffic flow during construction is an essential first priority. During the transition process, vehicular congestion can be minimized by rerouting traffic (but not through residential areas). It is also important to provide parking for any parking spaces displaced during the transition and for construction workers and vehicles. Some parking can be provided temporarily by reorganizing the private lots on the Langley Road block.

For maintaining smooth and orderly relations before and during the period of construction, the Centre stakeholders--the local business community and surrounding residential property owners--must be active participants in the planning and mitigation efforts. An extensive outreach program will seek to develop broad participation among all the groups involved.

Recommendations on Mitigation

First, along with other planning activities, a comprehensive Newton Centre Construction Mitigation Plan should be prepared by the Planning and Engineering Departments (and other City departments) in collaboration with Newton Centre business and adjoining residential property owners.

Second, our Groups suggest that prior to the start of a project, all construction projects, public as well as private, must be required to submit project-specific Construction Project Mitigation Plans covering the disturbances likely to be caused by their specific project and the specific mitigation efforts proposed.

XVI. GOVERNANCE

The ultimate decision-makers on Newton Centre's future are, of course, Newton's Mayor and Aldermen. To obtain a sharper focus and to increase local participation, a permanent Advisory Commission representing the City and various stakeholder groups could make an important contribution. This group could represent the local community, guide and monitor the progress of the Newton Centre renovation projects, and advise the Aldermen as the project evolves.

Recommendations on Governance

Our Groups suggest the creation of a permanent Newton Centre Advisory Commission, consisting of representatives of the Board of Aldermen, Newton Centre residents, merchants, and property owners. The Commission will serve as the liaison between the City and stakeholder groups in the Newton Centre community listening to concerns and facilitating communication. Working with appropriate departments of the City, the Commission would guide and monitor planning and development, the performance of the zoning overlay district, and public improvement projects. It would work cooperatively with interested parties and private investment groups to coordinate the projects planned for private and public sites. It would make regular reports to the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen.

Our Groups also suggest the creation of a Business Improvement District supported by local businesses. This organization can play an important role in improving the streetscape and in providing ongoing maintenance in the Newton Centre business area.

XVII. CONCLUSIONS

To take advantage of the economic and cultural offerings in Newton Centre and to achieve the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, it is important to take a comprehensive approach.

Making new arrangements for parking, parking structures, and smoothing the flow of traffic through the center are high priorities. A signature building in the Triangle would provide a focus around which village life can be enlivened. A zoning overlay district is recommended to make it possible for property owners to carry out the mixed-use development that is envisioned. The zoning overlay will facilitate financing under a DIF program and will support the growth of housing as envisioned in smart growth planning. A Newton Centre Advisory Commission can work with city planners, business and local residents to guide future development.



A Vibrant City Center

XVIII. AN ACTION PLAN FOR NEWTON CENTRE REVIVAL

An Action Plan put into place by the Aldermen will implement the numerous diverse steps needed to implement revitalization of Newton Centre.

The following is an Action Plan for Newton Centre revival. Some actions must clearly precede others. Priorities are indicated. Many of the recommended steps require simultaneous action on various fronts.

Primary responsibility for implementing the plan will fall on the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen. The proposed Newton Centre Advisory Commission, reporting to the Mayor and the Aldermen, will serve as a coordinating body, assuring that proposed plans are implemented and that plans are modified as required by changing circumstances.

The Action Plan

1. Approval in principle by the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen of the Newton Center Task Force Combined Group Two and Three Report.				Formation of Newton Centre Business Improvement District (BID)	
2. Appointment of Newton Centre Advisory Commission					
Traffic	Parking	Centre Triangle		Zoning and Design	BID
3. Appointment of Parking and Traffic Advisory Group and/or Parking Authority		Planning for Centre Triangle and Building Possible design competition. Professional financing study.		Approval of public and private design guidelines	Village maintenance and programs plan
4. Traffic study	Parking Plan	Establishment of a District Improvement Financing program (DIF)		Review of zoning and establishment of overlay zoning	Beginning of Village maintenance and programs
5. Planning of street improvements	Construction of Parking Structure(s) and temporary mitigation lots			Approval of off-site parking for business and housing	
6. Construction of roundabouts and curb improvements and pedestrian ways	Elimination of Parking from the Triangle	Site clearance	Fund raising for Triangle improvements	Cooperation with private property owners on planned construction	
7.		Construction of Centre Triangle building and fountain		Private construction	
8. .Newton Centre as an exciting, busy, revitalized village center					

If we fail to take actions now, future growth in Newton Centre is likely to repeat the helter-skelter development patterns that are responsible for Newton Centre’s present situation. It would not be realistic to assume that quick superficial actions will result in permanent improvement. If we act responsibly now, we have the opportunity to re-create a vibrant, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly village center.

NEWTON CENTRE TASK FORCE

COMBINED GROUPS ONE & TWO

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- Item A Housing
- Item B Zoning with Proposed Overlay Zone Map
- Item C Parking and Traffic with attachments
- Item D Public Sector Guidelines
- Item E Private Sector Guidelines
- Item F Sustainability
- Item G Other Documents Item G Pages Numbers
 - Commercial Gross Floor Area Pages 1-3
 - Height of Existing Buildings Pages 4-11
 - Business Improvement Districts (BID) Pages ... 12-13
 - 40-R “Smart Growth” Districts Pages ... 14-20
 - 40-Q District Improvement Financing (DIF) Pages ... 21-24
 - 40-S Educational Funding for “Smart Growth” Pages ... 25-28
 - Overview - District Improvement Financing Pages .. 29 -30
 - Sudbury Aqueduct Pages ... 30-34
 - Letter from All Newton Music School Page..... 35
 - Growth in Massachusetts Moving Forward Pages ... 36-39
 - Walkability – Metropolitan Areas Pages ... 40-41
 - Town Centers Pages .42-44A

NOTE: This Appendix contains the various Subcommittee Reports and other information that forms the basis of the *Combined Group Two and Three Newton Centre Task Force Report*. The Reports provide additional detailed background information that was not included in the Final Report. Furthermore, after the Subcommittee Reports were prepared they were subjected to further review and additional study within the overall context of the entire Newton Centre Study Area. Therefore, conclusions and/or recommendations of the individual Subcommittee Reports, while the basis of the Final Report; do differ in some instances from final overall strategy and comprehensive recommendations for Newton Centre.

January 15, 2008

Item A Housing

Housing

Introduction - Objectives:

Newton's residents are riding a wave of the city's changing ages and housing costs. Newton Centre's location, history and potential make it appropriate for "smart growth" development in the commercial area. This involves making the area more visually attractive and adding multi-family residential buildings, multi-story buildings with residences over retail, and low-rise multi-family housing in ~ transition areas. Creating housing that is more central can fill several demographic, environmental and vitality needs to enhance the whole neighborhood. Other recent Newton reports also speak about increasing diversity, walk ability and cohesiveness.

Mixed Use Development:

Newton has many large, single-family-detached homes, which will continue to set the character of Newton and accommodate people, especially in the child-rearing years. For those seeking different types of residences, developers have been creating (usually very expensive) condominiums and rental apartments on Route 9, Needham Street and elsewhere. However, there is a missing element in what has been developed, namely housing for those who desire to live right in the heart of the community with its conveniences and vitality. When people live in and near buildings housing the various services they want (food, entertainment, banks, clothes, dentists and cleaners for example) they are less dependent on cars, their environmental impact is less, they provide "eyes on" safety to the area and they become less socially isolated as individuals. There are more people on the sidewalks and customers for the businesses.

Newton Centre as a Place to live:

Location, location, location... Newton Centre has it. It is near the heart of Boston, with the convenience of the Green Line, buses and major north-south (Center) and east-west (Beacon) streets. It has a sprinkling of architecturally significant older, taller buildings as well as significant green spaces. The triangle parking lot used to hold a magnificent, four story elementary school and historic pictures show various uses in the area nearby which no longer exists. Today, there are many single stories architecturally undistinguished buildings in the immediate center and apartments have been replaced by commercial users on upper floors of multi-story buildings.

Different kinds of people would find Newton Centre an appealing place to live because of its convenient access to major area employment centers using the T, buses, bikes and walking; its convenient and unique shops and restaurants; its (potentially) lovely strolling environment of interesting storefronts, historic buildings and parks; and its maintenance-free, energy-efficient living in new structures.

Newton Demographics:

The city's stagnant or declining population is getting older and income stratification is occurring as housing prices rise. Statistics indicate that "new" Newton households are substantially wealthier than the people they displace. Housing needs are projected to need to grow between

Item A Housing

2 % and 3% over the next ten years and social and economic diversity needs to be continually addressed. Despite

Its image as a wealthy community, 30% of Newton residents earn less than 80% of the HUD-defined area median income: the income level that establishes the price of "affordable" housing.

It has been suggested that the Newton school system cannot support the creation of additional housing. While the City has never studied the source of increased enrollment, discussions with members of the real estate community in Newton strongly suggest that, while almost all-new housing in Newton has been multi-family, almost all of the increase in school enrollment is the result of younger families buying existing single-family homes from empty nesters.

Some seniors want to move out of their big homes and downsize to a townhouse, flat or a condominium where someone else would take care of maintenance. Others want or need to move within their community but with more care provided. Civil servants, business support staff, and young professionals who work in Newton's businesses and want a chance to live here affordably; as do the children of Newton residents. By living near the heart of Newton Centre in taller buildings, these and others can remain in the community and enhance the sense of community involvement.

What is Preventing Change?

Newton's city zoning regulations were drafted at the end of World War II and supported what the public wanted at that time. Then, having a modern home with a yard was preferred and old buildings (such as those in Newton Centre) reminded people of the depression and war struggles. Soldiers who had spent the war years living communally wanted to be separated from their neighbors and Federal transportation policy and mortgage subsidies supported the development of single-family subdivisions. Energy was cheap and shopping by car in one-story shopping centers with lots of parking places were the land-use model.

Now, with two-worker households and environmental awareness, we have changed our image of the future. "Smart growth" envisions less urban sprawl and wasteful consumption. Yet in Newton Centre, building heights are still limited to 24 feet without a special permit, and parking is required "on site" even if the building sites are too small to accommodate parking. Between this and the setback and side yard requirements, feasible multi-family development in Newton Centre not only requires a special permit but often a zoning variance as well.

For future development, owners of small sites would best work collectively to accommodate higher structures, different parking arrangements and compatibility with the best historic features of the Centre. Currently much of Newton Centre is serviceable but undistinguished and some of it has the right (higher) scale and distinguished character of being built for the long term. Ironically, most of the pre-war structures in Newton Centre could not be built there today.

Item A Housing

Some historic buildings are the "right" scale (generally less than 60 feet) with steep roofs compatible with the surrounding Victorian-era homes. Some are joined together to provide continuous rows of storefronts, encouraging patrons to visit more than one place. Their materials tend to be of durable, timeless materials and attractive. The single-story rows of shops belie our prosperity, our self-respect as a society and our care for the environment.

Under current zoning of the Newton Centre business area, housing is allowed but because of the height and parking restrictions, owners have little incentive to upgrade their properties and the strong

Retail market keeps rents high, even in deteriorating buildings. Whether it shows or not, the current buildings generally have old structural, plumbing and heating/air conditioning systems.

What is Proposed:

To renew the business area of Newton Centre we would do well to think about how we can have more residents (customers and contributors) actually living there, close to the many services. This will require the Aldermen to change the current zoning regulations to allow more housing to be built including above retail. Buildings should be comparable in height to the historic buildings in the Centre, scaling back as they near current single-family neighborhoods.

Parking (and the facilitation of the use of alternatives to private cars) would need to be addressed by the Aldermen by revising the on-site parking requirements. Short-term and long-term off-site parking can be facilitated by utilizing DIF and other revenue bond and public grant programs to build parking in advance; and developers (in exchange for the right to build higher) can be required to provide onsite parking or payment to the City's Parking Fund for the building of near-by structures (decked garages).

As has been the City's policy, a portion of these new units should be "affordable." These would be available to 30% of the current residents of Newton. Newton Centre is particularly suitable for this kind of housing as it is one of the few places in the City where one can live without owning a car. In conjunction with this goal, the City should seriously consider establishing Newton Centre as a Smart Growth Zoning District so that the City can receive State incentive payments for mixed income residential development. Over thirty Massachusetts cities and towns as varied as Boston, Plymouth, Reading and Newbury have or are in the process of establishing such districts.

Other sections of the Newton Centre Task Force document speak to improving pedestrian pathways through and between blocks of buildings to improve "connectivity", providing design guidelines on housing quality, and parking and traffic improvements. These are all an integral part of this proposal.

As the Newton Comprehensive Plan (currently under consideration by the Board of Aldermen) states:

Item A Housing

"Residential development that is well located in relationship to transportation, schools, commercial services, large employers and existing patterns of residential type and character benefit the City in multiple ways... Housing retained or developed in or near village centers supports village businesses, and having a broad array of village services within walking distance benefits residents. That linkage strengthens the vitality and quality of life for the (entire) area."

Item B Zoning

Zoning

Implementation

The bulk of this report has thus far focused on the elements of a vision for the future of Newton Centre. The purpose of this section is to discuss an implementation strategy for realizing this master plan. There are three major factors that must be considered: 1) zoning changes necessary to produce the types of structures and uses we want to encourage in the Centre; 2) financing options to pay for public and private sector improvements; and 3) phasing of construction projects to ensure limited disruption to the businesses and residents already there.

Zoning

The “Draft Newton Comprehensive Plan” calls for a “Flexible Moderate Growth” strategy for economic development in the City. This means a continuing focus on residential and village centers while seeking to enhance the urban amenities that make Newton such a favorable place to live. In particular, for village centers like Newton Centre, the Draft Comprehensive Plan recommends:

- a mixture of housing and commercial development;
- better parking options; and
- a partnership between commercial property owners and the City to promote a mix of businesses responsive to the needs of the residents. (Pages 6-6 and 6-7, October 2006, Draft Newton Comprehensive Plan).

Many of these recommendations can be implemented through the adoption of an overlay zone. Creating such a zone was one of the items in the Comprehensive Plan’s Economic Development Action Program (page 6-7).

Currently the underlying zone for the commercial area discussed in this report is either Business 1 or Business 2 (see zoning map below). We do not recommend changing this underlying zone, but instead establishing an overlay on top of the existing zoning. In some cases, the overlay zone may be more restrictive than the underlying zone (i.e. allowing banks or offices only on stories above ground level), in others more liberal (i.e. reducing setback requirements). The purpose of the overlay zone is to guide development in Newton Centre so that it becomes a more vibrant, cohesive, attractive and pedestrian-friendly community in which to live, work and visit.

Conventional use-based zoning codes regulate which uses are allowed where and have been utilized throughout the country since the early 20th century. Zoning restrictions were initially put in place to separate sometimes noxious commercial uses from housing and other types of uses. In suburban communities, times have changed and the population has grown. Now, more and more people are choosing to live in mixed use and densely populated areas. Town centers in the suburbs-- where you can step outside your home and are able to choose from a myriad of

Item B Zoning

activities from meeting a friend for coffee, browsing in a bookstore or watching an outdoor concert -- are where many people want to live. With energy costs on the rise, people are looking for a better quality of life that includes green space and a pleasant place to live without having to drive everywhere. Newton Centre is a prime location for this type of environmentally friendly, urbane lifestyle. The public infrastructure already exists with good access to public transportation. All that is missing are housing opportunities in the center and a diversity of uses that attract people to the streets at different times of the day and night.

Form-based zoning codes are a relatively new concept which address the relationship between building facades and public space, the form and mass of buildings in relation to each other and the scale and types of streets and blocks. It can regulate development at the individual building scale and often reflects a diversity of architecture, materials, uses and ownership operating within a communal vision and legal framework. Form-based code is presented in diagrams and text. A regulatory plan that designates the appropriate form and scale of development rather than only the land use types is in contrast to the focus of conventional zoning on permissible property uses and control of development through numerical parameters such as FAR, height limits, setbacks and parking ratios. A Newton Centre overlay zone should be a hybrid, which includes:

1. Regulating plan or map of the area designating where different building form standards apply
2. Building form standards, which regulate the features and functions of buildings.
3. Public space and street standards with specifications for the sidewalks, travel lanes, street trees, benches, etc.
4. Architectural standards, which control external architectural materials and quality.
5. A list of uses allowed by right and by special permit including where these uses may be located.
6. Parking requirements that allow for shared parking on private properties and public facilities.
7. Administration, which includes a clearly defined application and project review process.
8. Annotations and definitions to explain the use of technical terms and intention of specific code provisions.

Dimensional Standards

In this report, we do not attempt to write the actual code of the overlay zone. That is a technical task better left to lawyers experienced in this field. However, we do make recommendations about provisions that should be included in the overlay zone. The Public and Private Sector

Item B Zoning

Design Guidelines, described in detail earlier in this report, should be used as the basis for points 1 through 4 above. Chart 1 below highlights the changes recommended in an overlay zone with respect to site design.

Chart 1: “Dimensional Standards”

Zone	Business 1 (Existing)	Business 2 (Existing)	Overlay Core (Proposed)	Overlay Transition (Proposed)
Min. lot area	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Stories	2, 3 ¹	2, 3 ¹ , 4 ¹	n/a ²	n/a ²
Height (in feet)	24, 36 ¹	24, 36 ¹ , 48 ¹	Min. 36, Max. 60	Min. 24, Max. 48
FAR	1, 1.5 ¹	1.0, 1.5 ¹ , 2.0 ¹	3.0	1.5
GFA	10,000-19,999	10,000, 19,999	10,000-49,999	10,000-34,999
Need Special Permit for GFA	20,000+	20,000+	50,000+ ³	35,000+ ⁴
Front Setback	Avg. ⁵	Avg. ⁵ , Avg. ⁵ , ½ building height	0	Min. 0, Max 15 ⁶
Side Setback	½ building height	½ building height	0 ⁷	10
Rear Setback	0 ⁸	0 ⁸	15 ^{9,10}	15

¹ With Special Permit

² Number of stories is only limited by the building height

³ The 75th percentile lot size in the Core Area is more than 16,000 ft². A development on a lot this size with an FAR of 3.0 would be approximately 50,000 ft²

⁴ The 75th percentile lot size in the Transition Area is almost 21,000 ft². A development on a lot this size with an FAR of 1.5 is almost 32,000 ft²

⁵(Height+Width+Length)/3

⁶Lots directly abutting residential zones shall have 15’ setbacks from the property line abutting the residential zone.

⁷Building façade may not be more than 200’ without a break of 5’ for a pedestrian walkway (see Design Guidelines)

⁸ Unless abutting a public use or residential zone

⁹ To facilitate courtyards in the backs of buildings

¹⁰ Setbacks shall be 0’ along all street frontages. If the lot has street frontages in the front and back, interior courtyards shall be built instead of requiring 15’ rear setback.

An increase in the allowable FAR shall be permitted if the proposed development:

1. Significantly exceeds the minimum requirement for sustainable architecture (see Sustainability Guidelines in the Appendix of this report.).
2. Includes a parking lot or parking structure that is either deeded to the City as public parking or is available for use by the public (see Parking Section).
3. Includes more than the recommended 20% affordable housing units (see Housing Section).
4. Includes a 5’ pedestrian alleyway.

Uses

Some uses currently allowed in the Business 1 and Business 2 zones, such as auto-oriented businesses, are not conducive to creating the vibrant, pedestrian-oriented village center we want in Newton Centre. Other uses, such as banks, may be more appropriately located on upper

Item B Zoning

stories of buildings rather than on the street level where they interrupt the active streetscape. We understand that many of these uses already exist in Newton Centre and adoption of an overlay zone will not affect existing tenancies. Instead, the regulations should be changed so that no new “less-desirable” businesses move into the area in the future and in the event that a current tenant voluntarily decides to relocate, another similar use cannot take its place.

Further, there are other uses, such as outdoor cafes, which would add to the overall pedestrian and business experience, but are not allowed at all in Newton Centre or require a difficult approval process under current zoning. The overlay zone should include provisions that encourage these types of uses. Chart 2 below highlights some, but not all, allowed uses and the changes we recommend to uses in Newton Centre under an overlay.

Chart 2: Existing and Proposed Uses in Newton Centre

Use	Business 1(Existing)	Business 2 (Existing)	Overlay Core (Proposed)	Overlay Transition (Proposed)
Office	P	P	P, only on 2nd and 3rd floors	P, not allowed on ground floor
Bank, excluding drive-in facilities	P	P	P, only on 2nd and 3rd floors	P, not allowed on ground floor
Barbershop or beauty salon	P	P	P, only on 2nd and 3rd floors (restriction also applies to day spas and nail salons)	P, not allowed on ground floor
Dwelling units above the first floor, provided the first floor is used for a use allowed in Section 30-11(a)(1)-(11)	P	P	P, only housing is allowed above the 3rd floor	P
Accessory parking facilities, provided that such facilities are limited to a single level	P	P	Multi-level parking garages are permitted	P
Non-accessory parking facilities or multi-level accessory parking facilities	SP	SP	P, if ground floor includes retail uses	P, if ground floor includes retail uses

Item B Zoning

Multi-family dwellings	SP	SP	P, provided that the ground floor is used for retail and that 20% of the units are affordable as defined by the City's inclusionary housing ordinance (Section 30-24(f))	P, provided that 20% of the units are affordable as defined by the City's inclusionary housing ordinance (Section 30-24(f))
Drive-in businesses	SP	SP	NP	NP
Fuel Establishment	NP	SP	NP	NP
Garage Repair Shop	NP	SP	NP	NP
Indoor motor vehicle sales and service	NP	SP	NP	NP
Drive-in food establishments	NP	SP	NP	NP
Outdoor seating for restaurants in a privately-owned courtyard	N/A	N/A	P*	P*
Outdoor seating for restaurants, up to 10 seats allowed in a public right-of- way	N/A	N/A	P*, limited to 10 seats by approval of the Newton Centre Design Review Board provided the owner "leases" the right-of-way from the City. More seats allowed by SP	P*, limited to 10 seats by approval of the Newton Centre Design Review Board provided the owner "leases" the right-of-way from the City.
Payment of fee in lieu of providing on-site parking	N/A	N/A	P	P
Development with parking requirement provided off-site within 1200 feet of the building or use	N/A	N/A	P, with evidence of an agreement	P, with evidence of an agreement
Parking shared between more than one use	N/A	N/A	P, with evidence of an agreement	P, with evidence of an agreement

P= Permitted by-right, SP=Permitted with Special Permit, NP=Not Permitted, N/A= Not applicable

Item B Zoning

* Since outdoor seating is seasonal in Newton, the first 10 outdoor seats are not counted toward the parking calculation for the primary use.

In addition to these proposed changes to uses in the Business 1 and Business 2 zones in Newton Centre, the overlay zone shall also include a provision allowing a building to be built on land currently zoned as public use. This building may be used partially, but not wholly, for public use.

Parking

The Parking section of this document generally addresses point 6 with options for shared parking and fees in lieu of providing on-site parking. More specifically, the overlay zone should include the following parking provisions.

- New uses or development: No use of any premises shall be authorized or extended and no building or structure shall be erected or enlarged unless parking demands are addressed by:
 - (1) providing parking on-site;
 - (2) providing parking off-site within a private parking lot or a private parking structure within 1200 feet of the principal building, structure or use on the premises;
 - (3) providing parking off-site within a municipal parking lot within 1200 feet of the principal structure or use on the premises;
 - (4) payment of fees in-lieu of parking;
 - (5) a combination of the above options;
 - (6) complying with provisions of a required special permit
- Off-site parking shall not be separated from the use by any feature that would make pedestrian access inconvenient or hazardous. The site on which the parking is located shall be owned, leased or otherwise controlled by the party controlling the use.
- Existing uses: To maximize use of available parking, businesses with different hours of operation may use the same spaces at different times of the day with approval of the Planning Director upon the finding that the times of usage do not coincide.
- When a private lot or parking structure is proposed to satisfy the parking requirements, a recordable lease or easement of adequate duration must be provided to the permit-granting authority that states the basis for compliance with current Zoning Regulations.
- Fee in Lieu of Parking: Instead of providing some or all of the required parking on- or off-site, parking needs may be met through payment of in-lieu fees. The amount of in-lieu fees shall be based on the current cost of constructing a parking space in the greater Boston area. Such fees may be paid (1) in lump sum or (2) annually and amortized over 10 years. The fee per space shall be updated annually based on the cost of living index for the greater Boston area. Such fees will be deposited into a City "Parking Fund" to be used solely for the development or maintenance of parking that satisfies the demand requirements of new development within the overlay area.

Item B Zoning

➤ Parking Calculations.

1. Parking requirements shall be as provided in the proposed parking standards for Newton Centre and reduced by the modal split indicated in the most recent census. The modal split is the percentage of people that drive to an area. (In the year 2000, 65% of all visitors to Newton Centre drove their cars and the remainder arrived by other means. E.g., If City standards require a business to provide 100 parking spaces, this number would be multiplied by .65 and the number of parking spaces required would be 65.) When the calculation of required parking results in a fractional number, it shall be rounded to the next highest whole number if the fraction is one-half or more; otherwise it shall be rounded down to the next lowest whole number.
2. Tandem parking. For residential uses, when parking spaces are identified for the exclusive use of occupants of a designated dwelling required spaces may be arranged in tandem (one space behind the other) subject to approval of the Planning Director.
3. Bicycle Parking. Bicycle parking shall be provided as required by the Zoning Regulations. All bicycle spaces shall be located at the ground floor level. Projects that provide more bicycle spaces than required may reduce the required car spaces at the rate of one car space for each additional five bicycle spaces up to a 10% reduction.

Approval Process

An overlay should address Point 7, clearly stating the project review process. Under current zoning, property owners must obtain a Special Permit from the Board of Alderman for almost any change in use or density. Although technically the Zoning Ordinance allows some new development in Newton Centre by-right (without a Special Permit), the reality is that most of the existing lots and structures are non-conforming or the owners are unable to meet on-site parking requirements. As a result, they must apply for a Special Permit. Special Permits are discretionary and approval requires an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Board of Aldermen (16 out of 24). The Special Permit process can drag on for several years and can be very expensive with no guarantee of an approval in the end.

Because of this arduous process, many developers and property owners have chosen not to redevelop their property or have decided to do so in a way that purposely avoids the Special Permit process. Often such by-right developments are detrimental to the overall cohesiveness of Newton Centre. As part of the overlay zone, the Aldermen should establish an alternative approval process for properties within the boundaries of the Newton Centre overlay. Through a more transparent process, the City will have more control over development while still be able to encourage building that enhances the streetscape and vitality of the Centre. Specifically, we recommend the following:

Item B Zoning

- Increase the maximum gross floor area (GFA) of a building as of right, before a Special Permit is required (see Chart 1);
- Establish a Newton Centre Design Review Board of seven (7) members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Aldermen consisting of two (2) Aldermen, two (2) architects, one (1) planner, one (1) landscape architect and one (1) civil engineer;
- Provide the Design Review Board with the authority to approve developments under the Special Permit threshold provided the projects comply with the Design Guidelines adopted as part of the overlay zone.
- If the project does not adequately comply with the Design Guidelines, the Special Permit process described in the underlying zone must be followed. (i.e. in the Business 1& 2 zones, any project over 20,000 sq. ft. must be approved by a 2/3 majority of the Board of Aldermen.)

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

INTRODUCTION

A. Parking

In evaluating alternative parking locations to serve customers and employee in Newton Centre, the following criteria governed:

Constrains:

1. Assumed that only City or Government Agency¹ owned property is available.
2. Assumed that Eminent Domain is not an option.
3. Assumed that negotiations, with private property owners, can occur and result in benefits for customers, merchants, owners and the City.

Basic Parking Location Strategy:

1. Place longer term parking at the perimeter of Newton Centre eliminating the need for traffic, destined for the Centre, to enter the central shopping area.
2. Reserve street parking for customers' short-term parking using "Credit Card" meters or meters with increasing per time period rates.

Mitigation:

1. All Task Force Groups agreed that surface parking in the Triangle must be eliminated allowing the three commercial sub-areas in Newton Centre to form a "Village Centre".
2. Locations for temporary replacement parking has been identified that will allow construction or building(s) and a pedestrian plaza on the Triangle.

Brief Summary of Locations Considered for Parking Structures:

1. Northerly: Seemingly the easily area to locate a parking structure, it has, however, proved to be the most difficult. Many Task Force members felt that the parking area behind the Langley Road shops would be an ideal location but at least one owner raised strong objections. While there could be density bonuses for owners, apparently there is no interest.

At this time, many innovative approaches and two meetings with the MWRA resulted in the conclusion that construction on or over the Sudbury Aqueduct imposed costly construction restrictions and functional impediments. However, if the Aqueduct is abandoned or if a "by-pass" for the function of the Aqueduct is possible, this site must be reconsidered.

Replacing the Fire Station and Fire Headquarters buildings were considered but relocation sites for these facilities could not be identified, cost for replacement were a consideration, and, in any case, the location for customers was distant until the Langley Block was fully developed.

An underground garage below the northerly Green (the site for summer concerts) was investigated and legal restriction on use as well as width of the site proved to be limiting

¹ Meetings occurred with the MWRA and the MBTA. Memo regarding these meetings are attached.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

factors.

Therefore, unless negotiations with the property owners on Langley Road are undertaken and are successful or the Adqueduct is no longer required, the only remaining location for parking is below the Triangle in an underground garage. This is not in keeping with the Basic Parking Location Strategy but there is no other option.

2. Southerly: The existing Cypress Street Lot and air rights over the adjacent MBTA right-of-way allows a structure to be located on public property. The location can be enhanced through negotiations with the owner of the Herrick Street apartment building and/or the owner of the "Learning Express" building.

This location is convenient to shops on the southerly side of Newton Centre, the MBTA Station and any shops located on the Triangle.

3. Westerly: This is only available site totally under City ownership. The impediment, however, is *perceived traffic impact* on adjacent neighborhoods. *By designing a parking structure that is only accessible from Centre Street, the existing and any future traffic impact on neighbors living on Pelham, Pleasant or Crescent Streets can be reduced.*

There are two options under consideration. The first, envisions a parking structure utilizing City property on either side of Pelham Street. The second envisions a taller structure south of Pelham Street with the City Property north of Pelham devoted to housing.

4. Easterly: Since there is no publicly owned, property on the East side of the Centre, no public parking site is available. It is recommended that the City undertake two actions: first, negotiate with the owners of the existing private parking areas to see if shared parking during the day or in the evening when shops are closed would be acceptable and second, be prepared to purchase property on the east side if any becomes available.

B. TRAFFIC

There are two key recommendations regarding traffic:

1. Reduce the traffic volume by eliminating the need for vehicles to enter the central area of Newton Centre to find parking for shopping, business, or work. Use "Credit Card" meters to price the remaining short-term street parking at an increasing per hour rate².
2. Construct "Urban Round-About" at Beacon and Centre Streets and at Beacon, Langley and Sumner Streets. This will allow continuous flow of traffic automatically adjusting for changing directional traffic flows

² For example, the first 20 minutes could be free after swiping your credit card; the second 20 minutes would be \$5.00 and the third 20 minutes and thereafter would be \$10.00 per 20-minute period. If "Credit Card" meters are unavailable other meters with increasing rates per period are suggested.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

PARKING

Proposed changes in “The Triangle” will require relocation of existing parking. A key strategy for “finding” new spaces has included conversion of parallel parking spaces to diagonal spaces and sharing of parking spaces on private property. *Combined Groups Two and Three supports use of diagonals where they do not degrade the pedestrian experience or local circulation.* However, there is concern that too much diagonal parking or improperly placed diagonal spaces can cause conflicts that will endanger pedestrians and be detrimental to the center. In addition, Combined Group Two and Three generally favors use of the public right-of-way for wider sidewalks and landscaped medians rather than for maximizing parking on the streets. Groups Two and Three proposes some modest additions to on-street parking and parking structures for better use of available land to meet a variety of parking needs.

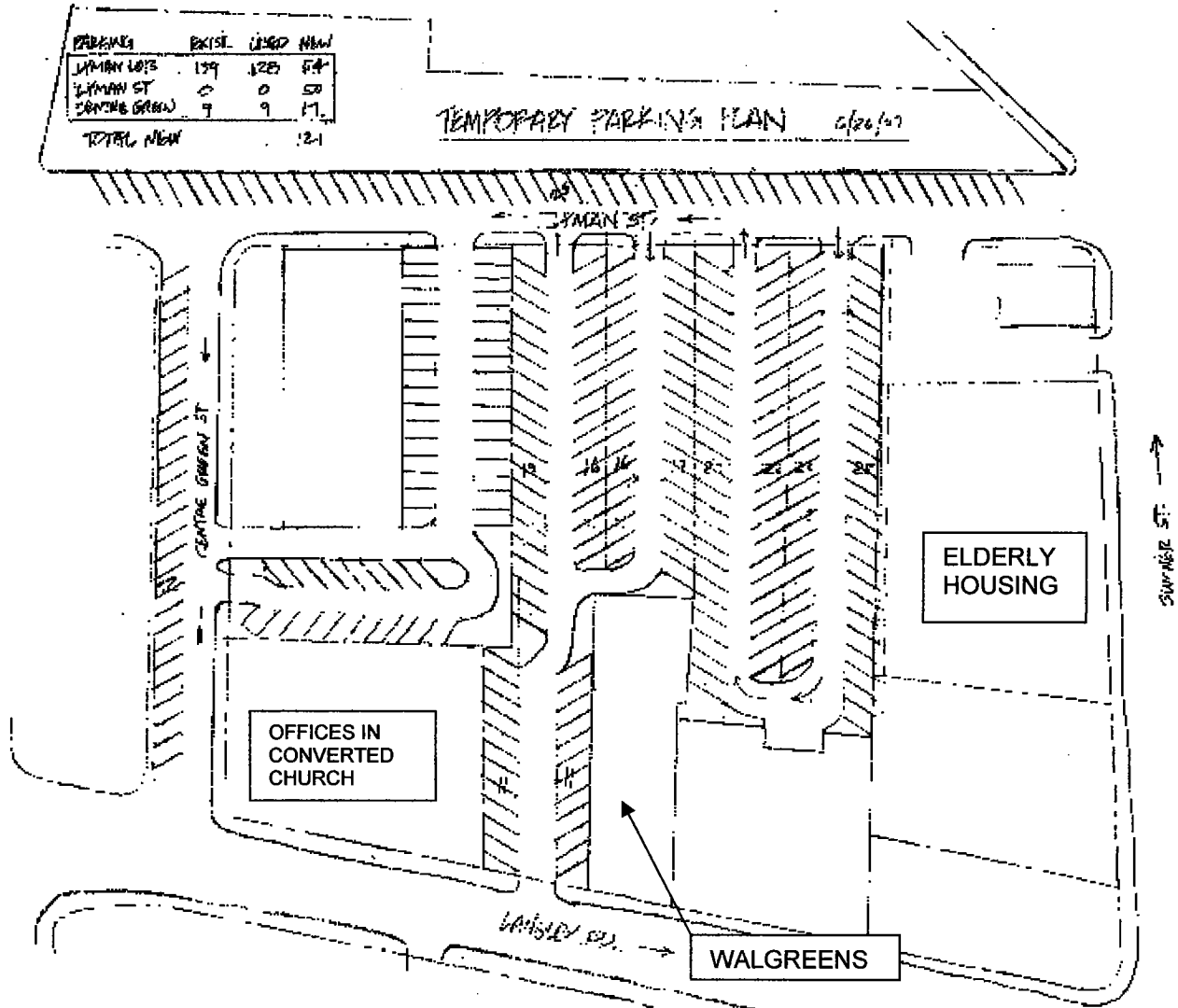
Replacement Parking

When “The Triangle” is made into a public space, replacement parking could be located in several places:

- Lyman Street. This street has a low volume and can tolerate delays that may occur with the addition of 35-40 new parking spaces. Because spaces are accessible from the rear of stores and on the perimeter of the center, they should be designated as long-term spaces to improve employee options. If it is not possible to widen Lyman Street to accommodate diagonal parking, consideration should be given to making it a one-way street so additional parking can still be provided there.³
- The private surface parking lots behind buildings that front onto Langley Road (and are accessed off of Lyman Street). Re-grading and repaving of these sites as shown below could result in as many as 50 new parking spaces. Public use of the new spaces would need to be secured and businesses could continue to have use of the spaces for their staff and patrons. Short-term spaces are recommended closest to the shops and long-term spaces designated to the rear of the lots. At least one owner did not reject this idea and indicated that it would be considered. When the construction of a parking garage is complete, parking spaces between Lyman Street and Langley Road would be returned to private use unless some other arrangement for public/private use is negotiated.

³ Review of traffic circulation revealed that fire engines heading south from the station on Willow Street typically circle the block and go down Langley Road. Changing the direction of Langley Road and Sumner Street could improve fire response time by allowing more direct access to the intersection at Langley Road and Beacon Street. Langley Road would flow from east to west (Sumner to Centre) with a right turn only allowed at Centre Street. Sumner Street where Lyman and Willow meet and Langley would run north to south. If Lyman were to become a one-way street to accommodate more parking, the streets could allow circulation in a single direction and good access to all points along the way. These changes appears to have no observed negative impacts on the center.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)



- Centre Green Street. Approximately 15 diagonal spaces can be provided on the west side of the street where there are no curb cuts. This also is a low-volume street and diagonals should not pose any problems there.
- Centre Street between Gibbs Street and Tyler Terrace. Between 8-12 parking spaces can be added to the west side. Since they would not be in front of any shops and are peripheral to the center, they could be useful for long-term employee parking.
- Private lots, especially those used by churches and some offices. To acquire the remainder of the 155 replacement parking spaces, the group supports requesting a temporary waiver of

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

parking requirements to allow use of church and/or office parking spaces at times when they are not otherwise in use.

- Langley Road. Diagonal spaces on the north side and elimination of parallel spaces on the south side would not increase the number of spaces, but would place them nearest the stores for easiest access during and after construction. This would be safer for pedestrians because now they often jaywalk if their cars are parked across the street. Since cars backing out of traditional diagonals have limited visibility, this poses a safety hazard. Back-in diagonals are recommended instead because they allow drivers to see the street when they exit and also allow for rear loading from the sidewalk.

Future Parking Demand

If more active space is added to the center of “The Triangle,” parking demand is likely to increase. The uses and scale of additions will determine future parking needs. For instance, consider projects that range in scale from 30,000 to 50,000 and include some restaurant, some retail and possibly some community space (see appendix for detailed description and parking calculations). Depending on the method used to calculate parking requirements, the range of required spaces varies widely. If the nature of uses is similar in parking demand to those already in Newton Centre and the current ratio of gross floor area is applied to the future uses, the requirement for parking will be very low (between 35 and 58 spaces for 30,000-50,000 square feet of new floor area). If the City’s Zoning Regulations are applied, 239-556 spaces would be required for the same square footages. A third method that computes parking based on the mixture of uses and the likelihood that people will park once and visit several places such as in shopping center, yields a requirement of 108-200 parking spaces for the same projects.

Census data and Newton Centre merchant surveys show that between 65% and 75% of employees drive to work and anecdotal evidence suggests that nearby residents often walk. Therefore, it is recommended that the City’s parking requirements for Newton Centre be multiplied by a factor of .7 (70%) to adjust for availability and active use of transit. With this adjustment, the parking requirements would range from 167 spaces for 30,000 sq. ft. to 389 for 50,000 sq. ft. of retail, restaurant and community space.

Additional parking is recommended in strategically-placed public facilities where the spaces can be shared. Parking structures that serve many uses reduce the overall need for individual businesses to provide parking and uses available land more efficiency than when parking is located in multiple surfaces lots. City-owned lots and other public properties are especially appealing sites because they do not require acquisition costs and generally are already well situated for local parking needs. At the present time, there is demand for parking throughout the center, so distributing it evenly and/or providing structures where demand dictates is optimal. As nonconforming uses leave the area, the city should consider purchase of land for possible future parking, especially on the east side of Newton Centre. Possible develop of City-owned properties is described below. Not all of the options described are viable at the present time, but are noted for their potential to serve current or future parking needs.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

ALTERNATIVE PARKING GARAGE LOCATIONS

A. Underground Parking and Development of the Triangle

After analyzing and discussing the various alternatives, parking under “The Triangle” is now the default location to satisfy the present and some modest future demand. Approximately 90-95 spaces can be provided per floor and two floors will more than replace the spaces that currently exist on the site. Because they are in the “prime” location ~ close to shops and the proposed new public space above it ~ they should be the highest priced spaces to discourage use by long-term parkers and ensure availability for consumers.

While parking under the triangle is the default location, the following items were considered as benefits to this conclusion:

People already gravitate towards “The Triangle” and if spaces are easily accessible and well-managed, a driver entering the structure would be more likely to find a space and circulating traffic would be contained within the facility and not on the street. Well-placed access points that allow through traffic to pass without conflicts with cars searching for parking will control congestion on the streets. By keeping parking on the streets to a minimum, sidewalks can be wider and the pedestrian experience given priority.

Whether on the street or in additional structures, long-term parking spaces on the perimeter will capture most employees before they enter “The Triangle” area and relieve it of some of the current demands.

Underground parking is more costly; for each level down parking goes, the cost increases in contrast to above-ground parking in which the cost per floor is fairly stable. For financial reasons, it may be necessary to limit the size of the structure to two floors.

Financing for approximately 190 parking spaces at \$50,000 per space would cost an estimated \$10 million. If financed by bonds and repaid over 10 years, the annual cost would be approximately \$1 million. Parking meter revenues currently generate about \$520,000 in Newton Centre. If additional parking spaces are added, parking rates are increased and citation revenues are included, it is possible to generate the necessary capital to repay bonds. Since parking in Newton Centre is also heavily used in the evenings during BC football and Red Sox seasons, extending the hours of operation of meters could be used to manage parking and also could generate additional revenue.

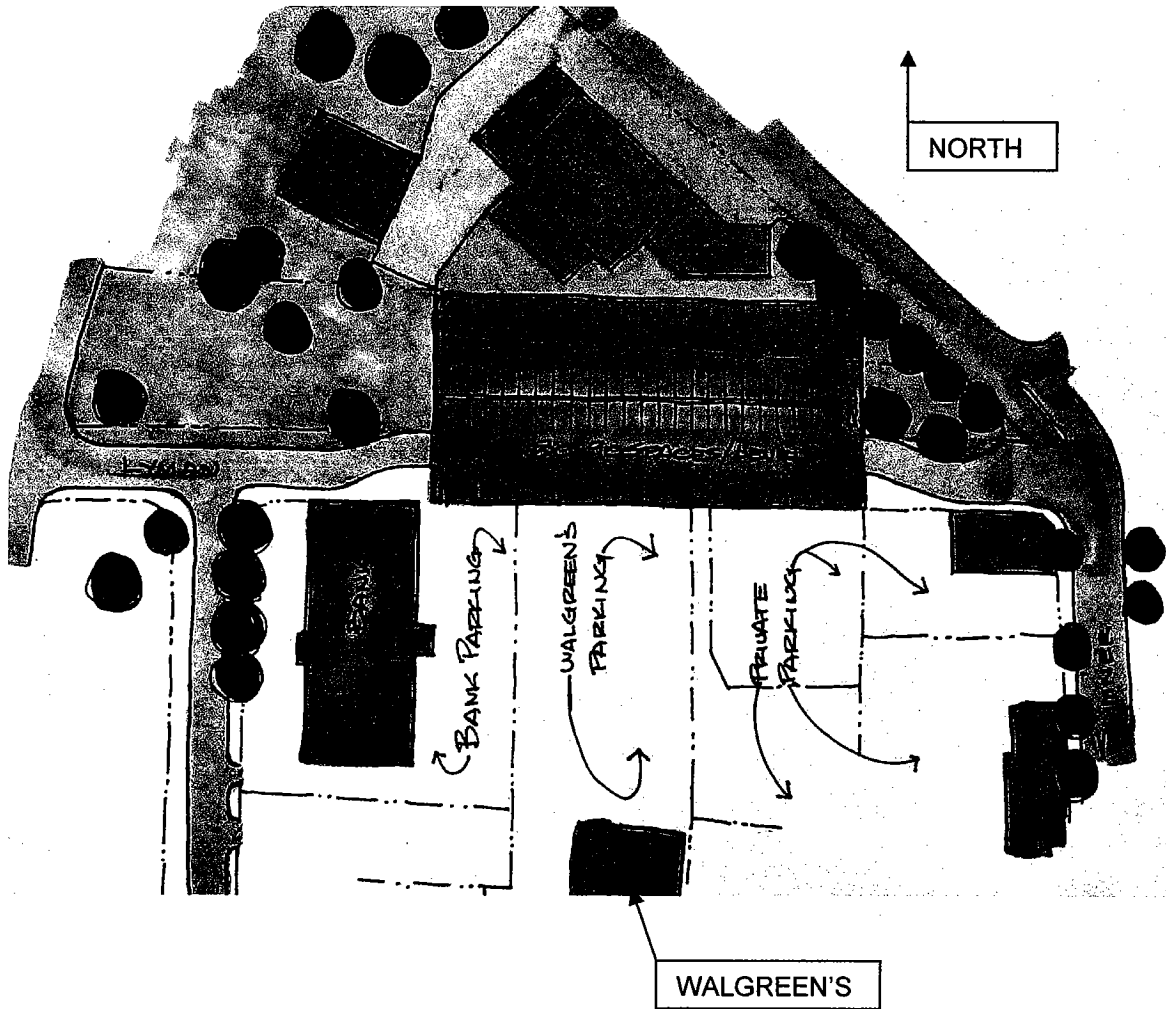
The conceptual design is efficient because it is rectangular and does not extend under the adjacent streets so, streets would remain open for circulating traffic during construction. Replacement parking behind the Langley Road shops would be in place before construction begins so existing businesses on Langley Road can be reached by either Langley Road or Lyman Street.

B. Lyman Street as an Alternative

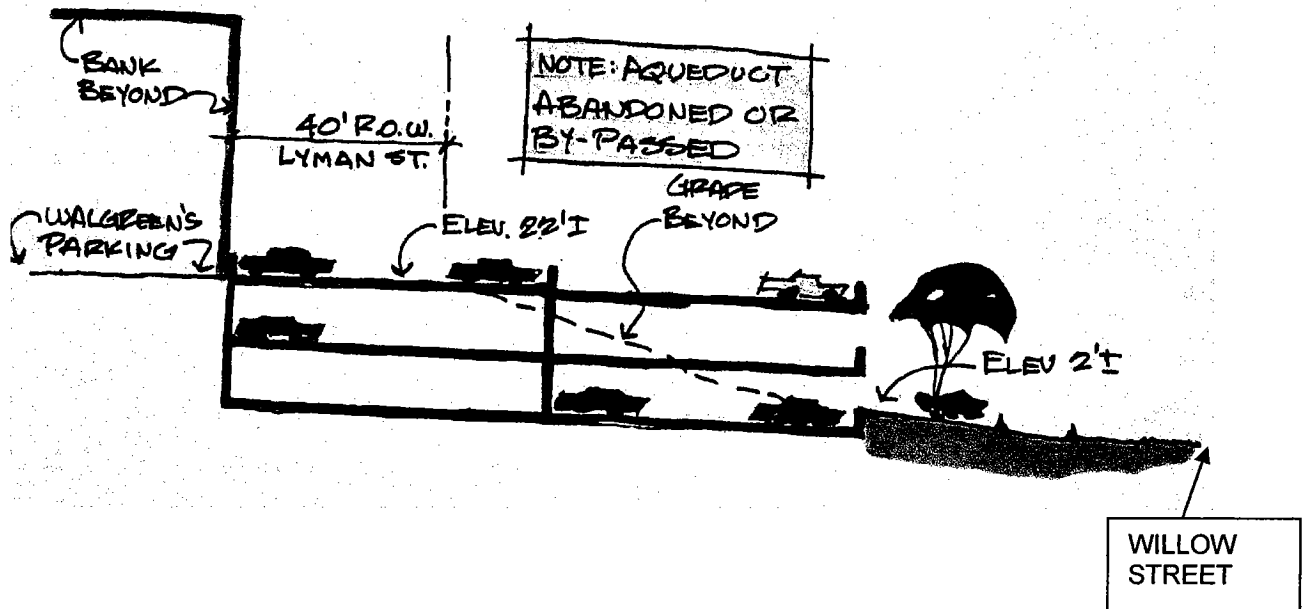
As previously discussed, options to build a sizable structure are limited by placement of the

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

existing aqueduct located 10 feet underground and running parallel to Lyman Street on MWRA property. The aqueduct is currently maintained as a backup system and it is possible that within the next 10 years, it may be abandoned and the potential to develop a structure into the slope of the hillside can be considered. In addition, it may be possible to provide a "by-pass" or otherwise construct on this site.



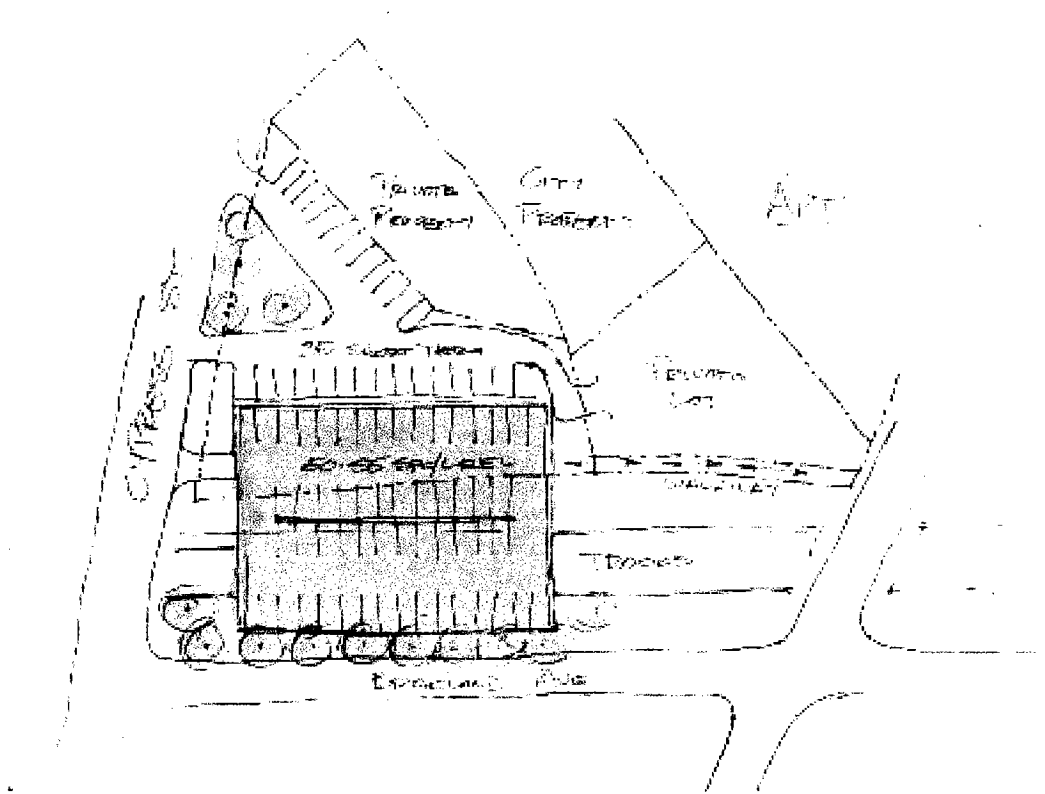
Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)



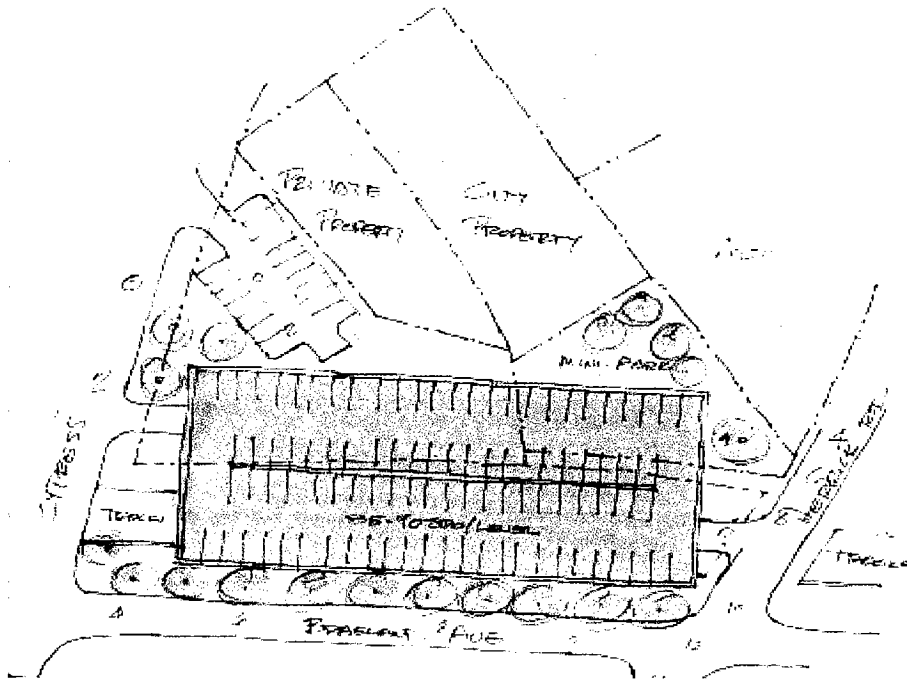
- C. **Cypress Street Lot for Long-Term Parkers.** The Cypress Street lot serves both commuters and employees and additional levels of parking on this site would have minimal impact on residents. Braeland Street separates the MBTA tracks from existing residences and there is only one house that faces Braeland Street adjacent to the site. In July 2007, MBTA representatives expressed a willingness to allow the City to encroach over MBTA property contingent upon some compensation in the way of additional revenue and/or commuter parking.

Design A (below) offers the benefit of retaining the surface lot for short-term parking that serves customers to the area. It extends over the tracks and will provide a sound buffer to adjacent businesses and residents. Design of the building will need to be sensitive to those as well and landscaping along Braeland Street to complement the streetscape and screen the building is recommended. The use of private properties is not needed to construct such a building and access to an adjacent private lot is maintained. The existing path to the MBTA station would remain in its current location. This structure could house between 50-55 spaces per floor.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)



CYPRESS STREET DESIGN A

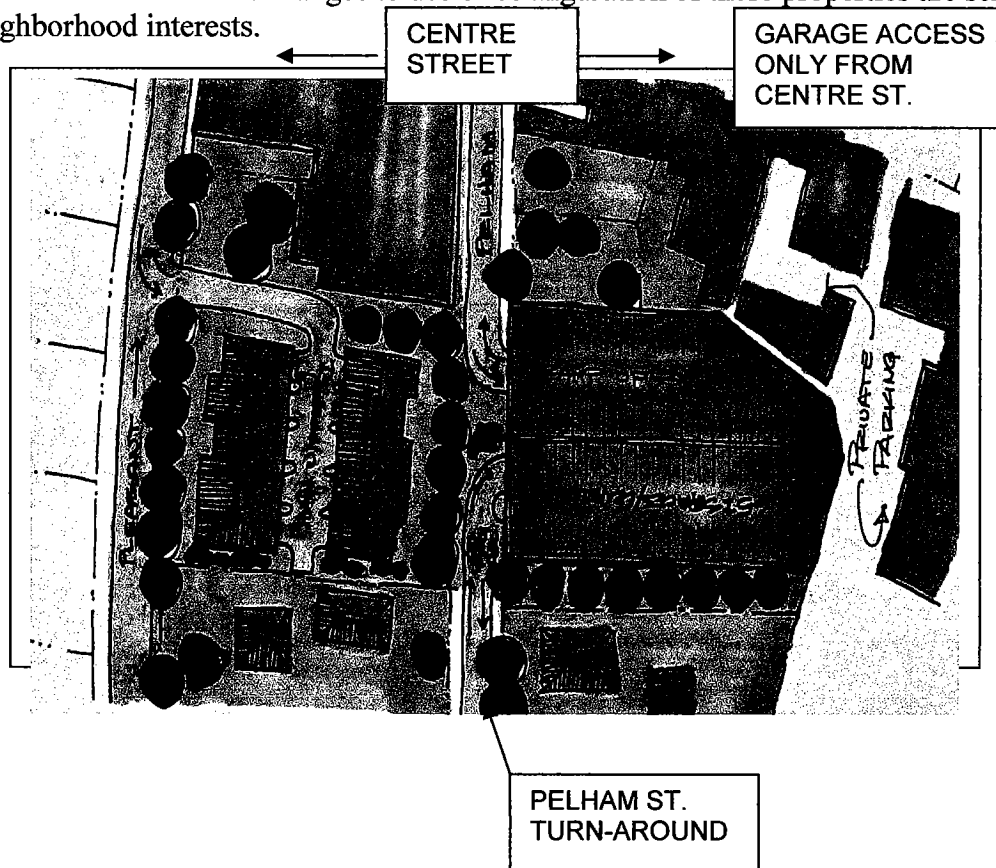


CYPRESS STREET DESIGN B

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

To achieve a greater number of parking spaces yet retain a building height that is compatible with those of surrounding buildings, Design B shows a longer structure. This structure also spans MBTA property and encroaches on a corner of the private parking lot to the northeast. It retains some short-term parking in a surface lot to the northwest. It offers the option of access from Cypress Street and/or Herrick Road which could serve to distribute traffic at two points. Again, landscape screening and context-sensitive building design would be required to assure the facility is a good neighbor. Due to the greater coverage of the tracks, it would offer more sound attenuation than the smaller structure. This design offers 85-90 parking spaces per floor. Parking for adjacent private property would need to be provided, possibly within the structure.

- D. Pelham/Pleasant Street Parking and Housing.** Because of their proximity to residential areas, both of these City lots were considered last. However, all sites considered have their limitations and the options given aim to resolve previous concerns. Special care must be taken to make sure that changes to use or configuration of these properties are sensitive to neighborhood interests.



A building of less than 30 feet in height on Pelham Street could provide 200 to 250 spaces in 3-4 levels; placing one level underground would further decrease its scale. There is ample space to include a ten-foot landscape buffer adjacent to residential property. The residential portion of the street could be returned to a two-way street with a cul-de-sac abutting the parking structure and guest parking for residences also could be provided at the turnaround or in a portion of the parking structure. Pedestrian access would be provided for residents. If parking is consolidated on the Pelham Street site, then the Pleasant Street lot could be converted to two-story housing units as a transition to the commercial area on Centre Street.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

The site would include residential landscaping and an ample side yard setback could be provided. No changes to the street are proposed on Pleasant Street, but a one-way loop could be created to from Pelham to Pleasant Street and back out to Centre Street where right turns only would be allowed. This circulation pattern would minimize conflicts by allowing entry and existing only off of Centre Street.

E. Centre Green Street

Despite the fact that this land has been altered in the past, State and local laws protects this City park with historic significance and several reviews would be needed to approve changes at this site. However, the location of Centre Green presents a good place for providing underground parking, since it is close to the shops and would be convenient for both shoppers and employees and the size allows for a structure with optimal dimensions. Disruption to the grounds would occur during construction under the green but could be restored to its original condition afterwards. State and local approval would be required to pursue this option and a key question is whether the laws that apply to activities on the ground also preclude improvements beneath it, even if the land is restored to its condition before construction.

F. Private properties

Private properties are not currently listed among possible sites for future parking, either. Since the Task Force first met, the parking lots that exit onto Lyman Street (behind Walgreens) have been viewed as attractive for providing parking in an efficient structure that would not impact the streetscape. Four different property owners that may have differing interests in what they would like to do with their land in the future own the land needed for an efficient structure. All four property owners would need to agree to cooperate in this effort and their own parking requirements would need to be reconciled by means that are not currently available to them (such as being permitted to pay fees in lieu of providing on-site parking or by exchanging land for use of parking spaces in a new structure, for example). A joint venture between the City and property owners may still be a strategy worth exploring, but has not been pursued by the Task Force at this time because of early indications that at least one of the property owners is not interested such a collaboration.

PARKING CALCULATIONS

Gross Floor Area Proposed	1 space/866 square feet of GFA ⁴	Mixed use formula ⁵	Newton Zoning Regulations ⁶	Zoning Regs x .7
50,000 square feet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25,000 restaurant • 25,000 retail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 spaces • 29 spaces <hr/> <p align="center">58 spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 146-160 customer spaces • 35-40 employee spaces <hr/> <p align="center">180-200 spaces</p>	(see footnote for assumptions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 309 spaces • 91 spaces <hr/> <p align="center">400 spaces</p>	280 spaces
50,000 square feet gross floor area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18,000 restaurant • 18,000 retail • 10,000 community space • 4,000 winter garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 spaces • 21 spaces • 11 spaces • 5 spaces <hr/> <p align="center">58 spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150-161 customer spaces • 30-34 employee spaces <hr/> <p align="center">180-195 spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 220 restaurant • 78 retail • 250 community space • 8 winter garden <hr/> <p align="center">556 spaces</p>	389 spaces
30,000 square feet gross floor area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15,000 restaurant • 15,000 retail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17.5 spaces • 17.5 spaces <hr/> <p align="center">35 spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87-96 customer spaces • 21-24 employee spaces <hr/> <p align="center">108-120 spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 184 spaces/ restaurant • 55 spaces/retail <hr/> <p align="center">239 spaces</p>	167 spaces
30,000 square feet gross floor area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9,600 restaurant • 9,600 retail • 8,400 community space • 2,400 winter garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 spaces • 11 spaces • 10 spaces • 3 spaces <hr/> <p align="center">35 spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99-103 customer spaces • 17-19 employee spaces <hr/> <p align="center">116-122 spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 118 spaces/restaurant • 35 spaces/retail • 210 /community space • 5 spaces/winter garden <hr/> <p align="center">368 spaces</p>	167 spaces
TOTAL				

⁴ Data provided through the assessor's office for the Newton Centre study area shows totals a gross building area of 821,286 sq. ft. and peak occupancy of 948 spaces (private and public demand combined) or an equivalent of 1 space per 866 square feet of gross building area. If the uses proposed in "The Triangle" have similar parking demand characteristics as those already in Newton Centre, then the future demand for parking would likely be in this range. If there are a greater proportion of high demand uses (such as restaurants and medical offices), then the parking required will be higher than this. Conversely, if low-demand uses dominate (such as bike shops or residences), the parking requirement would be less than this.

⁵ This method includes a reduction in parking for uses that complement each other where drivers typically park once and visit several destinations.

⁶ See calculations and assumptions in attached appendix.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

APPENDIX

Parking Calculations per Newton zoning standards

RESTAURANT CALCULATIONS

Requirement: 1 space/ 3 seats + 1 space/3 employees on largest shift

Assumptions: to estimate number of seats, assumed 20 sq. ft. per customer; to estimate number of employees assumed 1 employee per 200 sq. ft. if customer area; customer area = total square footage minus 1/3 of floor area for prep)

25,000 square foot restaurant

- 8,333 prep area

16,666 customer area (seating, waiting, restrooms)

Estimated number of seats = 833 (@20 sq. ft./customer)

278 parking spaces required per 3 customers

83 staff required to serve @ 1/3 =28 spaces

278 +28 = 309 spaces required

18,000 square feet of restaurant space

-6,000 square feet of prep area

12,000 square feet of customer area = 600 seats @ 20 sq. ft./ customer

200 spaces required @ 1/3 customers

12,000/200 sq. ft = 60 employees/3 = 20 spaces

200 + 20 = 220 spaces required

15,000 square feet restaurant

- 5,000 square feet prep area

10,000 customer area = 500 seats @ 20 sq. ft./customer

500/3 = 167 spaces required

10,000/200 = 50 employees/3 = 17 spaces

167 + 17 = 184 spaces required

9,600 square feet restaurant

- 3,200 square feet prep area

6,400 square feet of customer area

320 seats/3 = 107 spaces

6,400/200 = 32 employees/3 = 11 spaces

107 + 11 = 118 spaces required

RETAIL CALCULATIONS

Requirement: 1 space/300 sq. ft. GFA + 1 space per employee on largest shift

Assumptions: to estimate number of employees assume 1 employee/1,000 sq.

25,000 square feet retail

25,000/300 = 83 spaces for GFA

+ 25,000/1,000 = 25 employees/3 = 8 spaces

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

83 + 8 = 91 Spaces for Retail

18,000 square feet retail

18,000/300 = 60 spaces for GFA

+ 18,000/1,000 = 18 employees/3 = 6

60 + 6 = 66 Spaces for Retail

15,000 square feet retail

15,000/300 = 50 spaces for GFA

+15,000/1,000 = 15 employees/3 = 5 spaces

50 + 5 = 55 spaces for retail

9,600 square feet retail

9,600/300 = 32 spaces for GFA

+ 9,600/1,000 = 10 employees/3 = 3 spaces

32 + 3 = 35 spaces

COMMUNITY SPACE CALCULATIONS

The general assembly standards of public assembly were applied and include 1 space per seat and 1 space per employee on the largest shift. Staffing is expected to be limited to 1 person to provide access; cleaning staff would arrive after hours so, the primary basis for evaluation is seating. The space is envisioned as multipurpose space, but for purposes of estimating potential occupancy, 1 space 40 square feet of gross floor area is assumed (to allow for seating and non-seating space such as walkways, general gathering space, closets, etc.)

WINTER GARDEN

The Zoning Regulations list no requirement for recreational areas, or public parks so the standard of 1 space per 500 square feet was used.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

TRAFFIC

Traffic Calming and Management

As identified in the Consensus Plan, traffic calming and other traffic management modifications are recommended to slow cars and manage traffic flow. The improvements described below could be introduced at any time to improve existing or future conditions.

- Roundabouts at Beacon/Centre and Beacon/Langley intersections to calm traffic and reduce wait time
- Bulb-outs and elevated crosswalk on Beacon Street next to the driveway at the Post Office
- Bulb-outs or mini roundabout at Gibbs Street
- Landscaped boulevard for pedestrians to rest and visually narrow the lanes of travel on Centre Street between Beacon Street and Sumner Street
- Change paving material on crosswalks at roundabouts on Beacon Street at Langley and Centre Street
- Raised mid-block crosswalk and planters or decorative fencing along “The Triangle” to direct foot traffic across Langley Road
- Elimination of merger of Centre and Cypress Streets by 1) separating the two streets with a landscaped median from the point of merger to the proposed roundabout at Beacon/Centre Streets⁷; 2) installing a traffic signal where Cypress and Center streets converge⁸; or installing a mini-roundabout
- Live parking on Union Street in front of the MBTA stop on Union Street from 4:30 – 6:30 pm to reduce double parking and encourage drop off at the “T”
- Live parking on Braeland Avenue adjacent to the MBTA from 4:30 – 6:30 to reduce demands for drop-off and pick-up on Union Street
- Long-term meters on Braeland Avenue to encourage merchant use of spaces and free spaces on Union Street so customers don’t need to circulate as much to find parking

One-Way Loop

A one-way loop around Newton Centre also was considered but was found not to be feasible. The proposed loop would have circulated traffic counterclockwise between the intersections of Beacon/Centre Streets, Beacon/Langley/Sumner Streets, and Centre/Sumner Streets. While the one-way loop had the advantages of allowing easier access to diagonal spaces and required less lane width for traffic, the traffic analysis performed by McMahon Associates noted operational problems at the Beacon/Centre Streets signalized intersection. They concluded that “the overall level of service at the intersection is worsened with the redistribution of the traffic volumes with this configuration and is not an improvement to traffic operations at this location.”

⁷ State approval of the relocation of green space will likely be needed for this alteration which preserves the green space slightly west of its current location.

⁸ Funding for a signal at Cypress and Centre Streets is proposed by the Chestnut Hill Square Development Proposal currently under consideration and is listed in the CIP.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

Memo for the Record

May 10, 2007

Alderman Vicki Danberg and Committee Member K. Edward Alexander met with Fire Chief Joseph LaCroix

1. Regarding raised crosswalks.
 - a) The Chief had a drawing of a design that the Department would accept. The overall width is 20 feet and it is elevated 6 inches. There is a 6-foot slope, then an 8-foot level section, and a 6-foot slope. The level section is critical and could be wider.
 - b) He felt that his equipment moved relatively slow in approaching and driving through Newton Centre. Therefore, the 6 inch elevated section described above would not be a problem. In other locations where his trucks are moving faster, the 6-inch rise may be a major problem.
 - c) The raised crosswalk must be clearly marked --- yellow paint or something that his drivers can see at night and understand what they are approaching.
 - d) Drainage is a concern. If the street slopes (and all of them do), storm water drain must be provided on one side so that 6 inches of water will not collect.
2. Regarding the Fire Station
 - a) The “annex”, the one story structure at the rear and side of the Station, houses the Ambulance Group’s support facilities; the wire groups work shops, cable and supply storage, and equipment storage.
 - b) He would like to add a second floor to the “annex” for the above uses.
 - c) He would prefer that the Wire Section remain in close proximity to the Fire Department Headquarters for coordination and supervision. He could not suggest an alternative location. The Ambulance facility must remain, as it is an integral part of the operation.
 - d) In general, the second floor of the Station (as in most Stations) requires total renovation. Some of the changes are due to the introduction of women fire fighters but the Station is a half-century old and all the systems (heating, electrical, water supply) require an upgrade if not replacement (visual inspection indicates that the windows are not energy efficient but they are not currently schedule for replacement). The first floor, other than the overhead door openings (equipment is taller), is adequate. A/C in the living quarters as well as the administrative area is a modern day requirement.
 - e) Not surprisingly, a new station would be acceptable and he suggested a location in the Park across from the Headquarters Building. In other words, he requires a Newton Centre location but the Park is the only location owned by the City that could accommodate the Station.
 - f) The Headquarters building continues to function but it is not ideal. I sensed that a new facility is on his dream list.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

March 26, 2007

Added names of MWRA Staff 01/15/08

RE: Meeting with the WMRA

1. Alderman V. Danberg and NCTF members Terry Wendt, Ann Hockberg, and K. Edward Alexander met with Jae Kim, Deputy Director, Michael Hornbrook Chief Operating Officer, Ralph Francesconi Project Manager and Maureen McAvoy, Design Manager of the MWRA. Memo written by K. Alexander.
2. Keeping in mind that Engineers are conservative (which cuts both ways); the following is a summary of what I heard during the meeting. Part is what they actually said, and the other is based on experience of dealing with engineers and understanding what they do not say.
3. The MWRA will make a determination as to the long-term viability of the aqueduct but the study and decision will be at least 5 years away and possible 10. Funding and Implementation of the decision and subsequent construction will follow. Unless something like Homeland Security concerns speeds the process, we are looking at 10 to 20 years before the site is available if the decision is made to abandon the aqueduct. If the aqueduct is deemed important as a back up, the constraints on constructing a garage or parking lot are pretty much as they are now.
4. The City would have to assume the Liability for any damaged to the aqueduct.
5. The City would have to negotiate a land lease for the use of the property. It might be \$0.00.
6. The aqueduct has a stone foundation and sidewalls but the top is a curved arch made of brick. It must be approaching 100 years old.
7. A parking structure over the aqueduct is very unlikely to receive support from the engineering section of WMRA. (They did say if the lower floor was 15 or more feet above grade, it might be OK but they also know that it is extremely unlikely that the City Fathers would approve such a structure and the neighbors less likely to approve, so the clearance requirement is the equivalent of saying No.)
8. Depending on the depth of the earth cover over the aqueduct, a surface parking lot can be constructed. However, it *may* have to be "bridged" over the aqueduct. Drilled caissons (3 to 4 feet diameter) would be the preferred support if "bridging" were required. Driven piles would not be acceptable. Drilling vibrations would be a concern. One would assume that the caissons would have to be 10 to 15 feet away from the aqueduct, assuming that they could be closer would have to be supported by soil condition information and assurances that construction techniques would minimize vibration of the auger. The visual impact from Willow Street becomes an important consideration. Fencing (to prevent people from going under the bridge on the downhill side) and landscaping may mitigate this visual impact.
9. Assuming that "bridging" is *not* required for a surface lot, the location of a retaining wall would probably have to be about 15 feet from the aqueduct due to the construction requirement. Assuming that it could be closer would be very optimistic. The depth of fill over the aqueduct becomes a concern but it may be possible to have the lot lower than Lyman Street and this would reduce the amount of fill required as well as the height of the retaining wall.

I believe we must carefully look at the juxtaposition of this parking lot or structure to possible development of the northerly portion of the Langley Block *especially if Lyman Street becomes part of the parking lot as some propose.*

What is the view of the stores or housing built along Lyman Street? If housing, do people enjoy a tree-lined sidewalk on their walk to the Park? What if they wanted to visit a store on Centre Street, do they walk through a parking lot? What is the view from the housing along Willow Street (and ask oneself if these units were upper income would we even be considering a parking structure or a 15-foot high retaining wall in this location)?

In my judgment, an alternative location for parking needs to be identified on the northerly side of the Centre.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

April 25, 2007

Revised April 26, 2007

Memo for the Record

Alderman Vicki Danberg, City Engineer Lou Taverna, Committee Members Terry Wendt & K. Edward Alexander again met with Jay Kim, Deputy Director and Maureen McAvoy, Design Manager of the MWRA to explore way to utilize the MWRA property north of Lyman Street in Newton Centre that might be acceptable to the MWRA. Four optional approaches were identified.

Assumptions:

1. Langley Street 40 foot ROW is an integral part of a surface lot or parking structure for three of the alternatives. By using the Lyman Street, the main building of the Fire Station can remain.
 2. The wire storage/communication structure at the rear of the Fire Station is removed in alternative one, two and three as outlined below.
 3. Lyman Street will continue to provide truck and vehicular access to the Langley Block therefore; the vertical clearance for any structure over Lyman Street would have to be 14 to 15 feet.
 4. The utilities under Lyman Street can either remain in place or be relocated..
 5. The Langley Block's property owners will agree to pedestrian ways through their property to Langley Street.
 6. A zoning change is adopted requiring a building setback along Langley Street to provide a sidewalk and create a separation between any structure built over Lyman Street and any future buildings in the Lyman Block facing Lyman Street.
 7. The vertical height of the retaining wall (18 ft.) on the northerly side (adjacent to the corner of the main building of the Fire Station) or the vertical "closure" is not a visual deterrent.
 8. The height of a structure over Lyman Street and extending to the corner of the Fire Station is not a visual deterrent.
-
1. *Use Lyman Street & 15 to 20 feet of the MWRA land for 2 rows of surface parking while retaining service access to the Langley Block. Another two rows of surface parking and parking access would occur further north.*
 - a) The existing aqueduct would require protection from any load that could comprise the integrity of the structure.
 - b) It may be that soil could be place over the aqueduct without undue loads. A retaining wall of approximately 18 feet is necessary on the northerly side. If the

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

northerly two rows of parking could be lowered by one or two feet, the height of the retaining wall would be reduced. A fence is required at the top of the retaining wall or the wall could be three or more feet higher.

- c) The wire/communication work and storage building behind the Fire Station is eliminated.
 - d) The retaining wall would pass a few feet from the corner of the Fire Station's main building.
 - e) If it were determined that the integrity of the aqueduct would be comprised by earthen fill over it, a structural slab over its entire length is necessary. A retaining wall is still required.
 - f) The MWRA would retain the right to maintain or replace the aqueduct and this would probably require excavation and destruction of any improvements.
 - g) Approximately 100 to 120 spaces are possible less the spaces eliminate to provide access to the Langley Block.
2. *Place the lower floors of a parking structure fifteen or more feet above the MWRA property.*
- a) Use the 40-foot ROW of Lyman Street for access to the Langley Block and one row of surface parking. Then place a two level parking structure over Lyman Street and the MWRA property and provide clearance of at least 15 feet. The open area under the multiple levels structure would allow the MWRA to access the aqueduct with heavy equipment for repair or replacement. (Note: Clearance for truck access to the Langley Block will require a 14 to 15 foot for any structure placed over Lyman Street therefore this requirement is not onerous, as it seems.).
 - b) Columns for a multi-level structure require carefully placement so that damage to the existing aqueduct does not occur. Column placement would also have to consider the requirement for the operation of heavy equipment.
 - c) The required clearance over the aqueduct is approximately fifteen feet. However, due to the slope of the ground the lowest northerly edge of any structure would be approximately thirty-five feet above the ground. Some type of closure would be required.
 - d) It is assumed that the MWRA would not insist on the right to remove any structure if they found that the open area was not sufficient.
 - e) A 36 foot high, 2 level structure starting approximately 14 to 15 feet above Lyman Street (height required for truck access to the Langley Block) would provide 200 to 220 spaces plus the 25 or 30 spaces on the Lyman Street ROW.
 - f) A "closure" is necessary to present unauthorized access to the open area under the parking structure on the northerly side.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

3. *Replace the existing aqueduct with a steel pipe within a "box culvert" then build a parking garage.*
 - a) The 'box culvert' shaped structure must be of sufficient height and width that the steel pipe could be replaced in the future using minimum height equipment such as a modified forklift.
 - b) Surface parking or a multi-level structure could be built over Lyman Street and the "box culvert".
 - c) An eighteen-foot retaining wall would be required on the northerly side assuming that the lowest floor of a garage structure is on fill. If the lowest floor of the garage were structural, a "closure" would be required below the northerly side.
 - d) Approximately 100 to 120 spaces on a surface lot are possible less the spaces eliminated for access to the Langley Block. Assuming that Lyman Street provides truck access to the Langley Block, a three level structure measured from Lyman Street's elevation would be 36 feet high and provide 300 to 360 spaces less those eliminated for curb cuts.

4. *Relocate the Fire Department Headquarters Building to the corner of Willow and Centre Streets. Purchase or take by eminent domain the building at the corner.*
 - a) The entrance to the parking structure would be from Centre Street.
 - b) Approximately 100 to 120 cars/level can be accommodated. A three level structure (30 feet in height measured from Centre Street) would provide 300 to 360 parking spaces. It is possible to place portions of the first parking level below grade.
 - c) The MWRA aqueduct is not affected but portion of their property may be used.
 - d) The parking structure is not well located to serve the Newton Centre shopping but would be suitable for employee parking.

ACTION:

1. The Newton Engineering Department will estimate the cost of a stone clad retaining wall behind the Fire Station and the cost of fill.
2. The Newton Engineering Department will identify the utilities below Lyman Street and determine if they can remain in place or require relocation if a structure is built over Lyman Street. An estimated cost of any relocation will be provided.
3. Ms. McAvoy will determine the width and height of the "box culvert" and provide an estimated cost of replacing the aqueduct with a steel pipe enclosed within the "box culvert".

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

July 24, 2007

RE: Meeting with MBTA
ON: July 17, 2007

1. Met with Mark Boyle, Director of Real Estate, Joseph Cosgrove, Director of Development/Planning and Gregory A. Dicovrisky (617-482-2525) who is involved with the planning and design elements of construction.
2. Representing the Newton Centre Task Force was Victoria Danberg, Alderman, Candace Havens, and K. E. Alexander. Also in attendance was Louis Taverna, City Engineer.
3. The purpose of the meeting was to determine if there were any impediments to construction over the MBTA tracks.
4. The NCTF members outlined the possibility of constructing a proportion of a parking structure over the MBTA tracks between Herrick Road and Cypress Street. Essentially half of the garage would be on City owner property (Cypress Street parking lot) and the other half over the MBTA property. Discussed was the possibility that the garage structure could be located north of the tracks, therefore not actually being over the active rail lines.
5. It was understood that the ideals were conceptual in nature and that detailed information would be required regarding the foundations/retaining walls on either side of the tracks, the design and layout of the garage, and access roads positioning.
6. The key impediments identified by the MBTA were:
 - a) clearance over the track must be equal or exceed that provided by the Cypress Street bridge (18' 8" was mentioned),
 - b) as built information on the retaining walls on either side of the tracks must be determined as no records of the construction exist,
 - c) the MBTA would be receptive to working with the City, and
 - d) Financial and use arrangements must be negotiated for the use of the air rights.
7. The MBTA expressed concern for adjacent neighbors and their desire to mitigate any negative impact, especially lighting. The NCTF members agreed.
8. Regarding the financial arrangements, the MBTA would be looking for fair market value, commuter parking, and/or 50% of net revenue.
9. Since Red Sox and Celtics fans park and ride, the parking fee structure for the garage would have to consider this evening use. This use also increases MBTA rider revenue.
10. The MBTA also mentioned that John Munet from Zussman's office had contacted them about the possibility of Townhouses with parking below over air rights between Langley Road and Herrick Road.

Item C Traffic and Parking with Attachments (Revised 10/30/07)

Memo for the Record

May 10, 2007

Alderman Vicki Danberg and Committee Member K. Edward Alexander met with Fire Chief Joseph LaCroix

3. Regarding raised crosswalks.
 - a) The Chief had a drawing of a design that the Department would accept. The overall width is 20 feet and it is elevated 6 inches. There is a 6-foot slope, then an 8-foot level section, and a 6-foot slope. The level section is critical and could be wider.
 - b) He felt that his equipment moved relatively slow in approaching and driving through Newton Centre. Therefore, the 6 inch elevated section described above would not be a problem. In other locations where his trucks are moving faster, the 6-inch rise may be a major problem.
 - c) The raised crosswalk must be clearly marked --- yellow paint or something that his drivers can see at night and understand what they are approaching.
 - d) Drainage is a concern. If the street slopes (and all of them do), storm water drain must be provided on one side so that 6 inches of water will not collect.
4. Regarding the Fire Station
 - a) The “annex”, the one story structure at the rear and side of the Station, houses the Ambulance Group’s support facilities; the wire groups work shops, cable and supply storage, and equipment storage.
 - b) He would like to add a second floor to the “annex” for the above uses.
 - c) He would prefer that the Wire Section remain in close proximity to the Fire Department Headquarters for coordination and supervision. He could not suggest an alternative location. The Ambulance facility must remain, as it is an integral part of the operation.
 - d) In general, the second floor of the Station (as in most Stations) requires total renovation. Some of the changes are due to the introduction of women fire fighters but the Station is a half-century old and all the systems (heating, electrical, water supply) require an upgrade if not replacement (visual inspection indicates that the windows are not energy efficient but they are not currently schedule for replacement). The first floor, other than the overhead door openings (equipment is taller), is adequate. A/C in the living quarters as well as the administrative area is a modern day requirement.
 - e) Not surprisingly, a new station would be acceptable and he suggested a location in the Park across from the Headquarters Building. In other words, he requires a Newton Centre location but the Park is the only location owned by the City that could accommodate the Station.
 - f) The Headquarters building continues to function but it is not ideal. I sensed that a new facility is on his dream list.



McMAHON ASSOCIATES
180 Canal Street | Suite 500 | Boston, MA 02114
p 617-725-0099 | f 617-725-0049
www.mcmtrans.com

PRINCIPALS
Joseph W. McMahon, P.E.
Rodney P. Plourde, Ph.D., P.E.
Joseph J. DeSantis, P.E., PTOE
John S. DePalma
William T. Steffens

ASSOCIATES
Casey A. Moore, P.E.
Gary R. McNaughton, P.E., PTOE
John J. Mitchell, P.E.
Christopher J. Williams, P.E.
John F. Yacapsin, P.E.

December 29, 2006

Ms. Theresa Park
Economic Development Director
Newton City Hall
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

DRAFT

RE: Newton Centre Review
Preliminary Findings - Alternative 2 and Alternative 4
Newton, MA

Dear Ms. Park:

As requested, McMahon Associates, Inc. (McMahon) has evaluated two alternatives which were included in the initial findings of the Newton Centre Task Force in Newton, Massachusetts. *The Initial Findings Report of the Newton Centre Task Force* was prepared in March 2006 and summarizes the recommended potential changes to Newton Centre, including property use, design, traffic and parking, zoning, financing, and case studies. The following review focuses on specific traffic issues related to the two alternatives.

The first alternative, Alternative 2, includes the potential for two roundabouts along Beacon Street at Centre Street and Langley Street/Sumner Street. In order to assess the traffic conditions at these intersections, the existing peak hour traffic volumes collected by the City of Newton in October 2005 and shown in the attached figure were subjected to a detailed capacity/level-of-service analysis, as described below. Based on the results of the capacity/level of service analysis, McMahon has also prepared a concept plan that is attached.

The second alternative, Alternative 4, involves implementing a one-way traffic loop around the village center and includes modifications to traffic circulation in Newton Centre. We have performed intersection capacity/level-of-service analysis for this alternative using the existing October 2005 peak hour evening traffic volumes. The results of the analysis are included and discussed in further detail in the Alternative 4 - One-way Traffic Loop section included in this evaluation.

Alternative 2 – Roundabouts

Capacity Analysis Procedure

The capacity of a roundabout is determined separately for each approach. As stated in the Federal Highway Administration publication *Roundabouts: An Informational Guide*, the capacity of an approach “depends upon two factors: the circulating flow in the roundabout that conflicts with the entry flow, and the geometric elements of the roundabout.” Furthermore, the most significant geometric elements are the entry width and the number of lanes on the roundabout approach.

McMahon utilized the RODEL (Roundabout DELay) software to analyze the existing 2005 peak hour traffic volumes to determine operating conditions for Alternative 2, which includes the potential for two roundabouts along Beacon Street at Centre Street and Langley Street/Sumner Street. RODEL uses empirical equations based on analysis of field measurements. Furthermore, since RODEL accounts for geometric properties, it is our opinion that RODEL will provide results closer to actual operations compared to other software options. To determine the level of service (LOS) for each approach, the average delay reported in RODEL, given in minutes, is converted to seconds, two seconds are added to account for geometric delay and the resultant delay is compared to the LOS criteria for signalized intersections contained in the “Highway Capacity Manual”.

As the v/c ratio of a roundabout approach reaches 0.85, the sensitivity of capacity to geometric characteristics increases. Furthermore, there is a level of uncertainty in predicting intersection capacity at roundabouts. Most roundabout analysis models utilize only the most probable capacity, or the 50 percentile capacity. The uncertainty in capacity prediction results in uncertain v/c ratios and inaccurate prediction of capacity. In RODEL, the confidence level can be adjusted to reflect any percentile capacity. Accordingly, McMahon performed two separate analyses, one at a 50% confidence level and one at an 85% confidence level. The 50% confidence level analysis results were utilized to determine the delay for each approach. The 85% confidence level analysis results were utilized to verify that maximum queues do not exceed available storage or distance to an adjacent intersection.

Capacity Analysis Results

The results of the capacity/level-of-service analysis are illustrated in the attached figure for 2005 existing conditions for the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours for both the Beacon Street at Langley Street and Sumner Street intersection and Beacon Street at Centre Street intersection. Additionally, the detailed capacity analysis worksheets are attached.

Beacon Street, Langley Street and Sumner Street

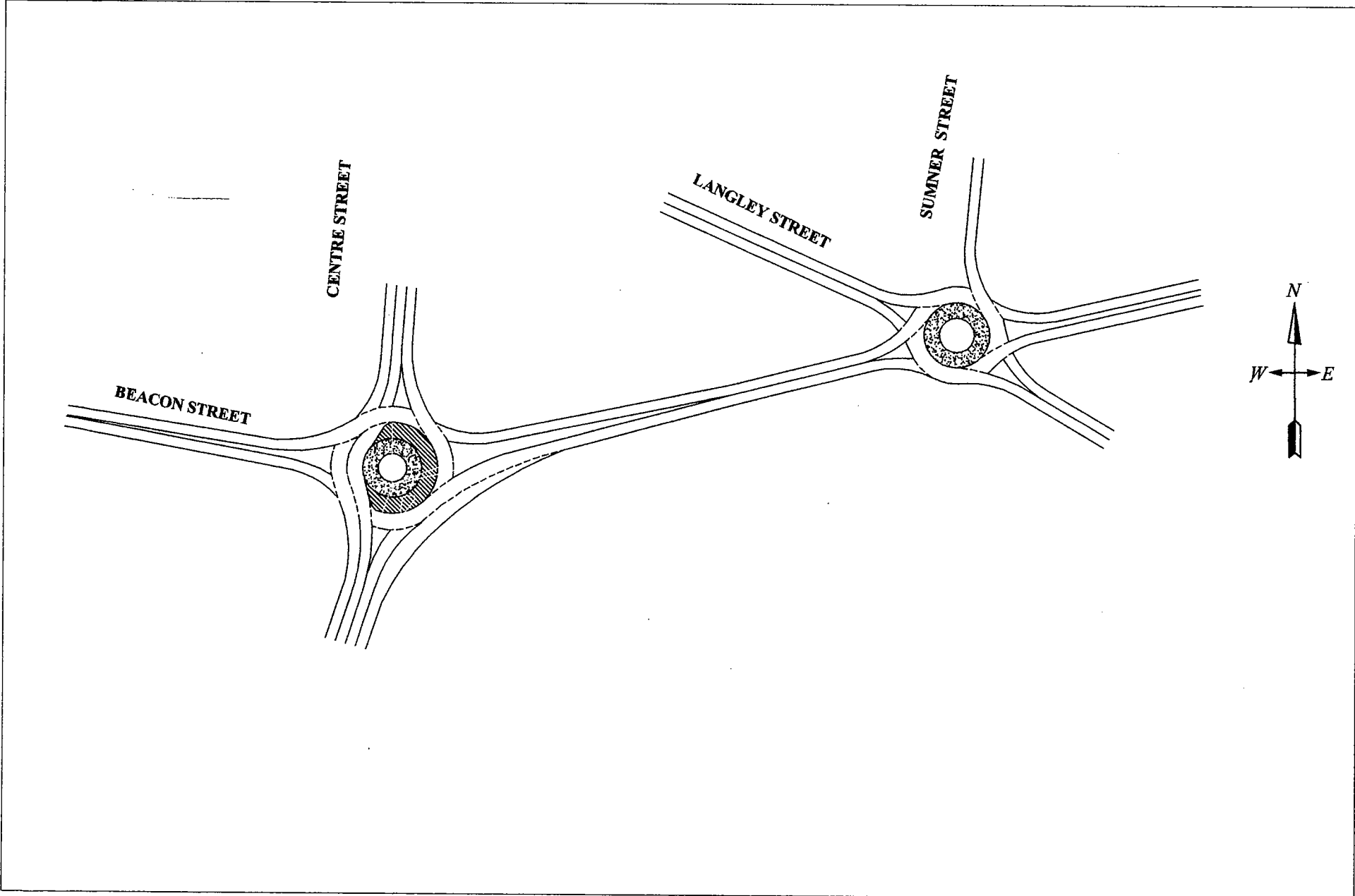
Based on the capacity analysis performed for the roundabout alternative, it is recommended that the Beacon Street, Langley Street and Sumner Street intersection provide single lanes on each approach. With this configuration, all movements at the Beacon Street, Langley Street and Sumner Street intersection will operate at LOS A or LOS B for both the 50% and 85% confidence levels during the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours. As a comparison, previous analyses done by the City of Newton for the 2005 existing volumes for the Beacon Street, Langley Street and Sumner Street signalized intersection gave results showing LOS C for current conditions during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours.

Beacon Street and Centre Street

In order to maximize operating conditions at the Beacon Street and Centre Street intersection, it is recommended to provide a single lane on each Beacon Street approach and two lanes on the southbound Centre Street approach. Additionally, considering the heavy traffic volumes traveling northbound on Centre Street and turning right onto Beacon Street, it is recommended the northbound Centre Street approach provide a single lane for left-turn and thru movements and a separate by-pass lane for right-turn movements. With this configuration, all movements at the Beacon Street and Centre Street intersection will operate at LOS C or better during the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours. These results are favorable in comparison to the previous analysis done by the City of Newton which showed the existing Beacon Street and Centre Street signalized intersection to be operating at LOS E during both the weekday morning and weekday afternoon peak hours.

Concept Plan

The number of lanes required within the circulatory roadway of a roundabout is dictated by the number of lanes required at each approach. For example, if two lanes are required on all approaches, a full two-lane circulatory roadway within the roundabout is required. Accordingly, at the intersection of Beacon Street, Langley Street and Sumner Street, a single lane circulatory roadway is required as shown in the attached concept plan. At the intersection of Beacon Street and Centre Street, two lanes are required from the southbound Centre Street approach to the southbound Centre Street exit and a single lane is required throughout the remaining of the roundabout as shown on the attached concept plan.



SCALE
1"=150'

CITY OF NEWTON
ROUNDAABOUT OPTION

Alternative 4 – One-way Traffic Loop around village center

Capacity Analysis Procedure

McMahon utilized the SYNCHRO capacity analysis software to analyze the existing 2005 peak hour traffic volumes to determine operating conditions for implementing a one-way traffic loop around the village center. Synchro is a complete software package for modeling and optimizing traffic signal timings. The key features of SYNCHRO include capacity analysis, coordination, actuated signals, and time-space diagrams. Furthermore, SYNCHRO provides a complete implementation of the Highway Capacity Manual and allows you to quickly analyze intersections and generate optimum timings to minimize delays given specific geometric conditions.

Capacity Analysis Results

The results of the capacity/level-of-service analysis are illustrated in the following table for 2005 existing conditions weekday afternoon peak hour for Alternative 4. Additionally, the detailed capacity analysis worksheets are attached for the Existing 2005 Alternative 4 .

Beacon Street/Centre Street Weekday Afternoon Peak Hour								
Intersection	Movement	Existing 2005			Existing 2005-Alt 4			
		Los ¹	Delay ²	V/C ³	Los ¹	Delay ²	V/C ³	
Beacon Street/Centre Street	EB	L	C	33.6	0.37	NA	NA	NA
		T	NA	NA	NA	F	125.5	1.14
		TR	F	105.0	1.09	NA	NA	NA
	NB	R	NA	NA	NA	A	7.4	0.37
		L	NA	NA	NA	F	396.9	1.72
		LT	D	37.5	1.59	NA	NA	NA
	SB	R	A	7.4	0.31	F	97.5	1.13
		L	B	15.8	0.38	D	40.7	0.87
		T	C	22.5	0.76	F	468.6	1.98
		R	A	8.7	0.07	NA	NA	NA
	Overall	E	55.7	1.54	F	233.9	1.98	
Beacon Street/Sumner Street/ Langley Road	EB	L	NA	NA	NA	B	16.5	0.81
		TR	NA	NA	NA	B	11.4	0.71
	WB	LTR	B	17.6	0.62	NA	NA	NA
		L	NA	NA	NA	A	9.6	0.35
		R	NA	NA	NA	A	7.5	0.65
	NW	LTR	C	29.7	0.91	NA	NA	NA
		L	C	34.5	0.48	NA	NA	NA
	R	D	46.3	0.69	D	42.3	0.71	
	Overall	C	30.1	0.91	B	14.6	0.81	

The existing signalized intersection timings have been optimized to incorporate modified lane geometries due to shifting from two-way to one-way travel on specific roadways, including Centre Street between Beacon Street and Sumner Street, Beacon Street between Langley Road and Centre Street, and making Sumner Street one way from Beacon Street to Centre Street. With this configuration and the redistribution of traffic volumes, the overall intersection at the Beacon Street and Centre Street intersection becomes LOS F due to several failing approaches. Previous analysis performed by the City of Newton determined that the existing intersection operates at LOS E during the evening peak hour which shows a drop in performance with the redistribution of traffic volumes under this alternative.

Conclusion

McMahon has evaluated the feasibility of a roundabout at the intersections of Beacon Street/Centre Street and Beacon Street/Langley Street/Sumner Street, Alternative 2, and also a one-way loop around the Newton Centre village center, Alternative 4.

Based solely on the results of the capacity/level-of-service analysis for Alternative 2, it is recommended that a single lane roundabout be provided at the Beacon Street/Langley Street/Sumner Street intersection. Under existing conditions, a single lane roundabout at this intersection will operate at acceptable levels of service during both peak periods studied. Furthermore, it is recommended that a roundabout with mostly a single lane circulatory roadway be provided at the Beacon Street/Centre Street intersection. In order to accommodate traffic on the southbound Centre Street approach, two lanes should be provided at this approach and within the roundabout from the southbound Centre Street approach to the southbound Centre Street exit. Additionally, at the northbound Centre Street approach, a separate lane should be provided to accommodate heavy right-turn movements. This configuration will allow for a single exit lane on the northern Centre Street leg. Under existing conditions, this roundabout alternative will operate at acceptable levels of service during both peak studied at the Beacon Street/Centre Street approach.

The initial analysis conducted for Alternative 4 or the one-way loop around the village center, shows that operational problems occur at the Beacon Street and Centre Street signalized intersection. Specifically, the overall level of service at the intersection is worsened with the redistribution of the traffic volumes with this configuration and is not an improvement to traffic operations at this location.

We look forward to working with you to discuss these issues further. If you should have any further questions or require further information, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.C. Findlen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and "F".

Steven C. Findlen
Project Manager

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEWTON CENTRE

The goal of this document is to establish Design Guidelines that will direct future public and private improvements, thereby resulting in a more cohesive, attractive, pedestrian-friendly Newton Centre.

The Design Guidelines are separated into two sections:

- A. Public Sector Improvements**
- B. Private Sector Improvements.**

The first section includes recommendations on the design of streets, sidewalks, open space, parking areas, and landscape as well as on the procurement and placement of street furniture, light fixtures, public signage and sidewalk materials. The second section makes recommendations to private property owners on compatible façade treatments, signage, building massing and materials.

The Public Sector Improvements shall be phased to minimize disruption to current businesses, residents and visitors to the Centre. The Private Sector Improvements may be implemented at any time at the property owners' discretion, or they may be required as a condition of the City's approval of a redevelopment project.

A. PUBLIC SECTOR IMPROVEMENTS

Currently no design standards exist for Newton Centre. Sidewalk widths, light fixtures, site elements, and landscape treatments vary greatly throughout the Centre. This document does not recommend that the streetscape in the Centre should be completely uniform, but instead proposes General Guidelines that can be modified to suit the unique character of Newton Centre's distinct areas.

Following the General Guidelines, this document addresses five distinct areas in Newton Centre: Langley and Union Streets (Low traffic streets), Beacon and Centre Streets (High Traffic Streets), the Triangle, Parking Areas, and Open Space. By doing so, this document recognizes the unique function of each of these areas and acknowledges that site elements used in one area may not be entirely appropriate in another area.

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES, to be followed throughout Newton Centre

1A. Streets and Sidewalks: *Well-designed streets and sidewalks are vital to the success of Newton Centre. While it is important to preserve ease of vehicular movement, particularly along Beacon and Centre Streets, Newton Centre is also a destination point and the heart of a residential community. It should be a place where people feel they can easily walk between businesses, parks and shops. Street and sidewalk design should support the objective of making a pedestrian oriented environment. Roads, particularly the wider Centre and Beacon Streets should be safe and easy to cross.*



- Build neck-downs (bumped out sidewalks) at all corners of all streets lined with parking spaces to shorten the distance that pedestrians have to cross the road.
- Consolidate pedestrian crosswalks, and mark them with concrete pavers, brick, paint or other special paving. Coordinate the design of the crosswalks with the design of the sidewalks.
- Limit the number of vehicular curb cuts and driveways to enhance pedestrian safety.
- Build 10'-wide raised treed medians along Centre and Beacon Streets to give pedestrians a safe halfway stopping point. Medians also indicate to drivers that they are entering a special place.



- Sidewalk widths will vary from street to street, but shall use a consistent palette of materials and design treatments. Possible paving and curbing materials include Stiles & Hart Boston City Hall paving brick, and Chelmsford Grey Granite.
- Place utilities underground throughout the Centre.



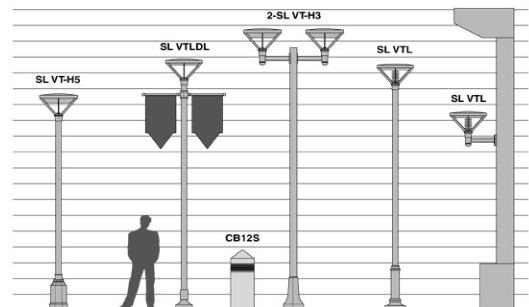
1B. Pedestrian Walkways and Alleys: *Pedestrian Walkways and alleys provide smaller scale routes for pedestrians to navigate the Centre. They should be well lit, safe, and pleasant.*

- Pedestrian walkways and alleys shall be constructed of the same palette of materials as the street sidewalks in Newton Centre. Their design shall incorporate the same light fixtures that are used throughout the Centre. Plantings and street furnishings shall be added wherever possible.
- Sidewalks and entryways shall be added behind those buildings that provide rear public access. These walks and entryways shall be constructed of the same materials as sidewalks along streets.



1C. Lighting: *In addition to providing security, decorative light fixtures help to establish the character of Newton Centre.*

- Use pedestrian-scale light fixtures 10'-14' high, of a simple design that can accommodate arms for planters and banners. Locate fixtures at regular intervals not greater than 70' apart.
- Light fixtures shall meet "Dark Sky" requirements.



1D. Street Furnishings: *Street furnishings - benches, trash receptacles, planters, bollards, newspaper dispensers, bicycle racks, tree grates and directional signage - combine with light fixtures to define the character of a particular place. They furnish a space and invite pedestrian involvement. The style and color of all street furnishings shall be coordinated. All shall be durable and easy to maintain.*



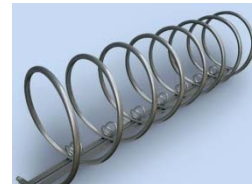
- **Benches** shall be located so that they encourage the enjoyment of specific spaces, whether along sidewalks or in parks. They may face quieter streets to facilitate people-watching, face away from busy streets, or face each other to encourage conversation. They shall be located outside restaurants to provide places for outdoor eating, or in parks to provide places for quiet reading or contemplation.



- **Trash receptacles** shall be installed at regular intervals along streets, at key intersections, close to (but downwind of) groups of benches, and at entrances to parking garages. Coordinate the style of the trash receptacle with the style of the bench. Trash receptacles shall be located a maximum of 60' apart.



- **Bike racks** reduce car traffic and parking demands by encouraging people to bike to the Centre rather than drive. Locate bike racks at transportation nodes (i.e., the T-Stop), major destination points, and public facilities.



- **Newspapers** shall be dispensed from identical looking boxes and shall be located so as not to impede the pedestrian flow.



- **Public Signage:** Clear, consistent, attractive and coordinated signage shall be located throughout the Centre. Directional signs shall be located to help visitors find parking and particular stores and services. Interpretive signs explaining the history of the area shall be mounted in appropriate areas. They can also be combined with orientation maps and community event information on kiosks. Historic plaques shall be mounted on structures of historic or cultural interest.









- **Public Art** shall be incorporated into the streetscape design. Examples of this technique include water features, sculptures, benches, decorative pavings, flagpoles, murals & clocks.



1E. Street Trees: Street trees enrich the appearance and health of an urban environment. Trees shade the streets, sidewalks and buildings, mediate the scale between taller buildings and pedestrians, reduce noise and pollution, and provide shelter for pedestrians.



- Trees shall be planted at consistent intervals along the streets to establish a rhythm and an aesthetic identity to the various areas of Newton Centre. Spacing should be between 20’ minimum and 40’ maximum, depending on the type of street and the width of the tree canopy. On wide streets with ample sidewalks, large shade trees with high canopies shall be spaced approximately 30’ apart. On narrow streets with narrow sidewalks, small trees with narrow canopies shall be spaced approximately 20-25’ apart.
- Current technology for tree planting (i.e. structural soil) shall be instituted for trees planted in sidewalks.
- Select named cultivars that are appropriate for the specific site conditions. Small flowering trees appropriate for planting in park areas include:

Common Name	Latin Name	Picture
Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry	Amelanchier x grandiflora ‘Autumn Brilliance’	
Eastern Redbud	Cercis canadensis	
Kousa Dogwood	Cornus kousa	
Merrill Magnolia	Magnolia loebneri ‘Merrill’	
Crabapple species- ‘Adams’, ‘Centurion’, ‘Donald Wyman’, ‘Harvest Gold’, ‘Prairie Fire’, and ‘Snowdrift’	Malus species	
Kwanzan Oriental Cherry	Prunus serrulata ‘Kwanzan’	
‘Ivory Silk’ Japanese Tree Lilac	Syringa reticulata ‘Ivory Silk’	

Appropriate urban street trees include:

Common Name	Latin Name	Picture
'Autumn Flame' Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i> Autumn Flame	
'Karpick' Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i> Karpick)	
Fastigate European Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus fastigiata</i>	
'Autumn Gold' Ginkgo	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> 'Autumn Gold'	
'Princeton Sentry' Ginkgo	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> 'Princeton Sentry'	
'Skyline' Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> 'Skycole'	
'Chanticleer' Pear	<i>Pyrus calleryana</i> 'Chanticleer'	
Northern Red	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	
Fastigate English Oak	<i>Quercus robur fastigiata</i>	
Regent Scholartree	<i>Sophora japonica</i> 'Regent'	
Valley Forge' Elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i> 'Valley Forge'	
Village Green' Zelkova	<i>Zelkova serrata</i> 'Village Green'	

2. UNION STREET AND LANGLEY ROAD (LOW TRAFFIC STREETS) *Partly due to their one-way vehicular traffic flow, and the shops and restaurants on both Union Street and Langley Road, these streets are currently two of the most pedestrian-friendly streets in the Centre. The goal of these Guidelines is to further enhance their enjoyable character.*

- Streets shall be curbsless and paved with decorative pavers to enable their occasional use as a pedestrian mall.
- Sidewalks shall be a minimum of 15'-wide to accommodate outdoor cafes, benches and plantings.
- Along with street trees, street furnishings and light fixtures, decorative flower planters or barrels shall define the street edge and lend the areas a unique identity.
- Flower baskets shall be hung from light poles, to provide color and identity.
- Bench locations shall be a maximum of 40' apart.



3. BEACON AND CENTRE STREETS (HIGH TRAFFIC STREETS) *Beacon and Centre Streets carry the most regional traffic flow throughout the Newton Centre. While it is important to facilitate this flow, drivers should also be signaled that they are entering a vibrant town center.*

- A 10-wide treed median strip underplanted with ground cover shall be added along Centre Street, from Willow Street to Cypress Street, and along Beacon Street from Chesley Road to Centre Street. The median will serve to establish the identity of Newton Centre, and indicate to drivers that they have arrived at a populated center of activity. By dividing the street, the median visually makes the road appear less wide. It will also make it safer for pedestrians to cross.
- The median curb shall be granite and 12 inches high.
- Sidewalks shall be at least 10 feet wide to accommodate pedestrian traffic flow in two directions, window shoppers and a row of trees along the street edge. The branches shall be cut a minimum of 8 feet above the ground to provide adequate clearance and so as not to obscure the building facades and business signs.
- Banners shall be hung from light poles.
- Bench locations shall be a maximum of 70' apart.



4. TRIANGLE *As the physical center of Newton Centre the Triangle is also the heart of the Centre. Instead of being filled with cars, the Triangle will should be filled with people. The Triangle should pulse with activities that attract visitors year-round, including meeting friends, playing ball, shopping, dining, or watching a concert. The pathways within the Triangle serve as arteries carrying pedestrians – the lifeblood of the Centre – safely from one activity to the next both within the Triangle and in the surrounding commercial areas.*



- Perimeter sidewalks along Centre Street shall be 10' wide.
- All other perimeter sidewalks shall be 5' wide.
- Pedestrian pathways within the park will vary in width depending on the expected pedestrian traffic load. (Need to come back to decide this specifically later.)
- The park shall be accessible from all sides, including paths through and around the building and the fountain.
- Defining decorative structures (such as a clock, kiosk or a flagpole) shall be located on the three corners of the triangle.



5. PARKING AREAS *As the first place that a visitor sees, well-landscaped and lighted parking lots and structures can enhance a visitor's experience of Newton Centre*

- Parking lots must meet or exceed landscaping requirements in the Zoning Ordinance §30-19.
- Provide a 4'-wide minimum perimeter of planting between a parking lot and a street or public way. A low decorative fence or wall may also be used. Woven wire fencing (i.e. chain link) may not be used.
- Provide sidewalks to safely move people from parking areas to businesses.
- Light fixtures shall match those fixtures used throughout Newton Centre, and shall be located closely enough to ensure visibility without glare into adjoining properties.
- Ecologically designed drainage swales are highly recommended.



6. PARKS AND OPEN SPACES *offer a respite from the buildings and traffic that characterize any downtown district. They offer a meeting ground for residents and visitors, an open space for community celebrations and events, a quiet bench for employees to lunch, or a garden to enjoy. It is important to have a variety of welcoming parks and plazas throughout Newton Centre to accommodate people's diverse needs*



- Strengthen the connection of Newton Centre with the Newton Centre Playground. Coordinate light fixtures, street trees, trash receptacles, and benches. Particularly enhance the edge of the Playground along Centre Street, as it marks the entrance to Newton Centre from the north. Build a well-marked crosswalk across Centre Street at Tyler Terrace to enable safe pedestrian passage across the street
- Design seating and plantings to take advantage of sun orientation, to protect from winds, and create a variety of inviting and comfortable spaces.
- Plant a variety of large trees, small flowering trees, shrubs and perennials throughout Newton Centre's open spaces. Re-establish the perennial border maintained by Newton Pride.

B. PRIVATE SECTOR IMPROVEMENTS

The City currently has little control over the improvements made to private property in Newton Centre. Adoption of these guidelines for use during the special permit process (or other newly developed process for redevelopment in the Centre) will allow the City to have a hand in ensuring that the master plan vision of Newton Centre will be implemented over time.

Private Sector improvements should be implemented when a property is redeveloped or renovated. City approval of building permits should be conditioned on designs adhering in spirit to these guidelines to ensure that Newton Centre becomes a more cohesive, attractive and pedestrian-friendly environment.

In Newton Centre today, there is not one central architectural theme. Building heights, construction materials, façade treatments and private signage vary greatly. This eclectic character can provide for a visually pleasing and interesting streetscape. These design guidelines do not attempt to discourage this variety, but rather to foster it. Identical buildings and facades would make the Centre look drab and boring – similar to a generic strip mall rather than the diverse commercial center it is and should continue to be. The intent of this document is to give private property owners ample leeway to creatively design buildings and facades that contribute to the overall vibrancy and attractiveness of the Newton Centre streetscape. Rather than dictate one particular design standard, many of the recommendations in these guidelines offer property owners a range of compatible options for design. By doing this, the design of the Centre will continue to be varied, but, at the same time, it will appear more cohesive and organized.

In addition to general guidelines that apply to the entire Centre, this document divides the physical design of Newton Centre into the ***Core Area*** and ***Transition Areas*** (see map below for the boundaries of each area). Because it is important to recognize the diverse characteristics and functions of these areas, unique design guidelines are offered for each category.

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES, to be followed throughout Newton Centre

1A. Site Plan: *The location of a building on its lot and the way it is accessed by the public are vital elements that contribute to the creation of an interesting and pedestrian-friendly streetscape in Newton Centre. A uniform setback from the street encourages pedestrians to easily walk along the sidewalks peering into shop windows and to stop when something catches their eye. Providing on-site parking (if required) in the back of the building*



rather than along the front minimizes pedestrian and vehicular conflicts and allows people to freely and safely move along the sidewalks. Courtyards filled with plantings, furniture and adequate lighting, tucked behind or between buildings provide a pleasant respite for visitors to the Centre. These areas would pleasantly compliment the public parks and open spaces in the Triangle and along Centre Street.

- Facades shall not be built continuously for more than 200' without a minimum 5' break for a pedestrian pass-through (alley).
- Alley walkways shall be constructed of materials similar to those used on adjacent sidewalks and shall be well-lit with similar light fixtures.
- Drive-thru access is prohibited.
- New curb cuts shall not be permitted. If possible, existing curbs shall be consolidated or eliminated (see new zoning for off-site parking).
- Adjacent property owners shall explore opportunities to link access drives behind buildings and share parking across property lines to minimize curb cuts along entire blocks. (See parking plan for options on shared parking).
- On-site parking, if any is provided, shall be located behind buildings and shall meet or exceed landscaping requirements in the City of Newton's Zoning Ordinance §30-19 and Newton Centre Public Sector Design Guidelines Section 5: Parking Areas.
- If on-site parking is provided behind the building, the Owner shall provide a secondary public entrance at the rear of the building.
- If no on-site parking is provided behind the building, the Owner shall provide landscaped seating areas or courtyards behind their buildings. In addition to being accessed from the buildings themselves, these spaces shall be accessible from adjoining alleys and pedestrian walkways.
- Furniture, light fixtures, sidewalks, and plantings in these seating areas/courtyards shall be constructed of a similar palette of materials as the public spaces in Newton Centre.
- Dumpsters shall be screened from parking lots, streets, pedestrian pathways, and adjacent residences.



1B. Buildings: *The streetscape is defined by the buildings that frame it. The types of building materials used and the way they are detailed will enhance the appearance of the architecture and the pedestrian's experience. Façade treatments, dormered windows and/or recessed upper stories often makes a large building appear less massive at the street level. Buildings should be compatible throughout the Centre, but need not be the same height nor constructed with identical materials.*



- Buildings shall conform to Architectural Guidelines contained in the Appendix of this document.
- Buildings shall not be constructed with vinyl siding, opaque or reflective glass, or have stucco finishes.
- Windows shall not be recessed.



1C. Facades: *There is never a second chance to make a first impression and a store's front façade is almost always a potential customer's first impression. Quality building materials, flower boxes, awnings, creative signs and colorful displays all contribute to an attractive and inviting storefront. Passersby are more likely to enter a store if the outside is eye-catching and appealing. Three-dimensional facades with recessed doorways, overhead awnings and projecting signs all add depth and vibrancy to the streetscape. Continual facade maintenance is also vital to ensure that people come back.*



- Each store in a larger building shall have varied, but compatible awnings.
- Where there is public access in back of the building, facades shall be enhanced with signage, plantings and sidewalks.
- At least 50% of the entrance doors shall be glass.
- Multiple store facades in a single building shall be coordinated with similar colors, signage and windows.
- The framing elements, separating individual stores on a building façade, shall continue on the upper stories as well.
- Window boxes and window baskets shall be installed where possible and shall be maintained by owner.



1D. Signs: *Signage is one of the most important elements of a streetscape that can attract customers to the area. Wall signs are a business' primary means of identification and must be large enough to be seen from across the street to advertise their location. In addition, small signs projecting from the façade are noticed by people walking along the sidewalk. They may be more artistic, perhaps providing details about the goods or services a store offers. Signs should be appropriately lit in the evening while the store is closed to entice customers to return during business hours. Lighted signs also enliven the streetscape at night. Signs may have a mix of lettering type and color but should be compatible in size throughout the Centre. As with other streetscape elements, identical signage on adjacent stores is discouraged as it will make Newton Centre look and feel like a strip mall instead of a vibrant, diverse commercial area.*



- Individual signs on the same building or on adjacent buildings should complement each other but shall not be identical in color or materials.
- Internally illuminated signs are prohibited.
- Projecting signs shall be hung 8' over the sidewalk to ensure clearance.
- Projecting signs shall not extend more than 6' from the building façade.
- Design of projecting signs shall coordinate with the building to which it is attached. The bracket shall also be decorative and coordinate in style with the sign itself.
- Window signs shall not be taped to the windows or doors.
- Lettering on first floor windows shall cover no more than 20% of the glass area.

2. SPECIFIC AREA GUIDELINES:

Newton Centre is a prime location for “smart growth” development. Currently, the MBTA stop provides easy access to and from the area and commercial development in the Centre provides ample employment. What the area is presently lacking however is vibrancy in the evenings. During the morning commute as well as during lunchtime the Centre is bustling with activity. If people lived above shops and restaurants, the Centre would be an exciting destination at night as well. A mixed-use development with retail uses on the ground floor and housing or offices on upper stories should be encouraged in Newton Centre. This type of development will bring people to Centre at different times of the day and during different days of the week. Development can also be eco-friendly. A varied mix of stores and services in the Centre would allow people to live there without a car (or one less car). Concentrated density in a few areas opens up more green space elsewhere in the Centre.

Any new development must be well-designed. These guidelines acknowledge that the more intensive development described above is not appropriate in all areas of Newton Centre. The map on page x physically divides the Centre into two distinct categories: *the Core Area* and *Transition Areas*.

2A. Core Area: *The Core Area consists of the streets that face the Triangle (Langley Road, Beacon and Centre Streets). Sixty foot buildings in this area will not overwhelm the streetscape or create a cavernous feeling at street level because they will not directly face other buildings across the street. In addition, a wider range of uses and building types is acceptable in the Core Area because it does not abut the surrounding neighborhoods.*



Site Plan

- Buildings shall have zero setbacks from the adjacent sidewalks along the street.

Buildings

- Buildings shall be a minimum of 36' and a maximum of 60' in height.
- Doorways may be recessed to provide more display space in front windows.

Facades

- Frame each store (or frame at 20' intervals on larger stores).
- Windows within frames shall start at a maximum of 2' from street level and shall be at least 8' high.
- At least 70% of linear footage of the first floor façade should be transparent glass doors or windows.
- Windows shall be plate glass without mullions.
- Buildings with a sign band shall locate it 8' above street level. The sign band shall provide the background for individual business signs.

Signs

- Wall signs shall fit on the sign band if one exists on the building with lettering large enough to be seen from across the street.
- Permanent freestanding signs shall be prohibited.
- Temporary sandwich board signs shall be located so as not to impede pedestrian flow.

2.B Transition Areas: *Transition Areas are blocks further away from the Triangle that are close to or abut residences. Development in these areas shall be less intense in both use and appearance. The height of buildings in the Transition Areas shall gradually step down from the maximum allowed in the Core Area to a height compatible with the adjacent houses. Building materials and uses should also be compatible with the nearby residential neighborhoods.*

Site Plan

- Building setbacks shall be no less than zero feet and no more than 15 feet from the sidewalk.

Buildings

- Buildings shall be a minimum of 24' and a maximum of 48' in height.

Facades

- Windows shall be residential in both size and character.

Signs

- One freestanding sign shall be permitted within the front setback.
- Freestanding signs shall conform to the standards set out in §30-20 of the City of Newton's Zoning Ordinance.

ITEM F SUSTAINABILITY

Report of Environmental Guidelines Subcommittee

Environmental sustainability guidelines

The intent of this document is to simplify the existing national code named Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Although LEED was created in pursuit of a noble goal that we share, it is extremely complicated and provides no incentives beyond formal recognition of expensive efforts. Rather than awarding potential developers abstract LEED certifications, we wanted to entice them with the prospect of building larger structures and thus making greater profits in exchange for building energy efficient structures.

Also, we kept in mind that small and medium size construction companies and home owners cannot afford LEED certifications even if they wanted to build energy efficient structures. In order to allow them to do that, we wish to extend these guidelines to all new construction within Newton Centre Revitalization project and, consequently, use them as a prototype for the entire city of Newton.

I. Existing Conditions

From the environmental point of view the designated area of our study presents the following **challenges**:

- Most of the existing structures are energy inefficient and create large amounts of air pollution;
- The existing parking lots don't have enough greenery and create large heat islands;
- Most of the flat roofs have obsolete materials and don't reflect enough solar energy back into atmosphere thus contributing to the heat island effect;
- The area has too much of impervious surface that creates large amount of run-off water which taxes the city's storm sewage system **and does not recharge the water table.**

II. Goals

In order to fulfill our task of creating a vibrant urban habitat in the village of Newton Centre we must amend the current zoning **to allow** greater density within the designated boundaries. In order to achieve this goal we **will** present the Board of Aldermen with a viable solution to the current environmental, economic, social and aesthetic problems of the area. The following proposal concentrates on the environmental issues of that task.

III. Means

Encourage sustainable development in conjunction with the petition # 391-06 by Aldermen Vance and Baker to incorporate the rules of environmentally sound practice in Newton Zoning Ordinance. In view of the recent passage of this petition and in support of the principles of sustainable architecture advocated by the State of Massachusetts, the Green Decade Coalition of Newton, the Newton Conservators and the community of Newton at large, we propose the following:

- *Saving and creating open space while accommodating a greater density of new development;*
- *Reducing energy consumption of each structure;*
- *Reducing life cycle cost of each structure;*

ITEM F SUSTAINABILITY

- *Incorporating the best practices of new building technology;*
- *Creating FAR (Floor Area Ratio) incentives for applicants who fulfill the following criteria.*

IV. Criteria

Every new construction in Newton Centre shall **incorporate** the following basic design principles:

- *Orienting a structure's envelope in accordance with the sun and prevailing wind;*
- *Maximizing a structure's volume to surface ratio;*
- *Maximizing on-site greenery and open space;*
- *Active use of solar and wind energy;*
- *Passive use of solar and wind energy;*
- *Active use of geo-thermal energy;*
- *Use of energy efficient heating and lighting;*
- *Collection of rain water for reuse;*
- *Use of water saving appliances;*

V. Requirements

All new construction applicants who wish to receive the above mentioned FAR incentives in Newton Centre shall fulfill at least 15 of the total 30 Credit Point requirements. These incentives are determined as additions to Newton Zoning FAR limits in the following schedule: *15 Credit Points - 0.1 FAR 20 Credit Points - 0.2 FAR 25 Credit points - 0.3 FAR*

Credit I (5 points) Building envelope.

Use of energy efficient building envelope, including: use of thermal insulation beyond the requirements of Massachusetts Building Code; specifying the most durable, water repellent building materials; maximizing the volume to surface ratio of a building*.

Credit II (5 points) Solar energy

Active use of solar power for space heating and/or electric lighting including photo-voltaic cells, water-type solar collectors, and other.

Credit III (5 points) Wind energy

Active use of wind power for electric lighting including wind turbines of various types and capacities, and other.

Credit IV (4 points) Geo-thermal energy

Use of geo-thermal energy for space heating and cooling including heat pump systems of various types and capacities; cooling ponds and spray ponds for space cooling, and other.

Credit V (2 points) Green roofs and green walls.

Installation of natural perennial greenery on roofs and walls of a structure.

Credit VI (2 points) Passive use of renewable sources of energy.

Proper orientation of structures; use of passive solar collectors such as Trombe walls and water columns; use of passive solar devices, such as sun scoops, sun breakers and sun shelves; use of passive wind collectors such as wind scoops and operable skylights; and use of indoor greenery, water pools, and other.

ITEM F SUSTAINABILITY

Credit VII (2 points) Electric lighting, regeneration of heat and efficient appliances.

Use of energy efficient electric lighting and heating including fluorescent instead of incandescent bulbs, collection and distribution of heat from lighting systems; use of the most current energy efficient furnaces and water heaters; use of the most current energy efficient fuels and appliances. .

Credit VIII (1 point) Rain water collection.

Use of rain water and gray water for irrigation including installation of rain water cisterns; use of kitchen and shower water for irrigation and other.

Credit IX (1 point) Water saving appliances.

Use of water saving appliances including low-flow shower heads and faucets; use of low-flow and foam toilets, and other latest technological achievements.

Credit X (1 point) Landscaping.

Landscaping above and beyond the current Newton Zoning requirements including landscaping more than the required 5% of a parking lot area; installation of green roofs and gardens, planting deciduous trees in front of the south-exposed walls and roofs; planting evergreen plants in front of north-exposed walls.

Credit XI (1 point) Recycling.

Use of recycled materials that were salvaged or processed from demolition of an existing structure(s), including brick, concrete, wood, steel and other, at the minimum amount of 10 cubic yards, **and recycling materials that cannot be reused on designated project.*****

Credit XII (1 point) Topography.

Minimal change of the existing topography, including: limiting the imported and exported soil to and from a construction site to the maximum of 10% of the re-graded soil.

* The intent of this document is to serve as a prototype for the environmental requirements of Newton Zoning Ordinance. It was endorsed by David DelPorto, Vice President of the Newton Solid Waste Commission. Currently it is being discussed by Newton Green Decade Coalition, Newton, High Performance Building Committee, and Newton Centre Task Force Committee.

** Below are computations of the Volume to Surface Ratio relative to the 20,000 s. f. maximum development area allowed by the current Newton Zoning ordinance. Graphic illustrations are to follow shortly.

*The increased density itself is an energy saving, pollution reducing and the open space increasing mechanism. For example, a 2-story, 20,000 s.f. structure would have a 10,000 s. f. footprint and a Volume to Surface Ratio (VIS) of 11.1. But the same 20,000 s. f. structure of 4 stories would have a 5,000 s. f. footprint and a VIS of 22.2 or 9% greater. This means that the 4-story structure is more energy efficient and occupies less land than the 2-story structure.*****

2-story structure -11.11 VIS 3-story structure -12.20 VIS 4-story structure -12.22 VIS 5-story structure -12.05 VIS 10-story structure -10.00 VIS

Also, the 4-story structures are less expensive than taller structures and aesthetically more compatible with the historical urban fabric of Newton such as Union Street in Newton Centre, Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands, Centre Street in Newton Corner and Washington Street in West Newton Center.

*** Applicant must submit a Solid Waste Management Plan with the emphasis on recycling and hazardous waste in accordance with the state and local regulations.

SUMMARY: Newton Centre
Commercial Gross Building Areas

<u>Use</u>	<u>Gross Area</u>
AUTO REPAIR	7,227
CANOPY	4,289
COMMERCIAL BSMT	71,591
GAS STATION	3,456
OFFICE	287,610
PARKING DECK	27,386
RETAIL	208,634
STORAGE	4,788
UTILITY BSMT	131,899

Newton Centre Commercial Gross Building Area									
Parcel	Location	Office	Retail	Other Use	Gross Area	Other Use	Gross Area	Other Use	Gross Area
61027 0001	761-771 BEACON ST		4,220	UTILITY BSMT	4,220				
61027 0002	208-214 SUMNER ST		2,809	COMM. BSMT	2,809				
61027 0017	739 BEACON ST		3,237						
61027 0018	741-747 BEACON ST		2,915	UTILITY BSMT	2,915				
61027 0019	749 BEACON ST			AUTO REPAIR	4,247				
61027 0020	749-759 BEACON ST		6,737	UTILITY BSMT	6,860				
61032 0003	1148 CENTRE ST		2,570	COMM. BSMT	4,858	CANOPY	108	Parking Deck	4,768
61033 0002	10 LANGLEY RD	29,282	6,678						
61033 0005	1188 CENTRE ST	21,580		COMM. BSMT	2,186	UTILITY BSMT	6,634		
61033 0006	22-28 LANGLEY RD		9,696	UTILITY BSMT	9,744				
61033 0009	191 SUMNER ST	3,248							
61033 0012	209-213 SUMNER ST	2,010	1,970	STORAGE	4,788	UTILITY BSMT	2,919		
61033 0013	36-46 LANGLEY RD		6,342	COMM. BSMT	1,205	UTILITY BSMT	5,222		
61033 0014	30-30 LANGLEY RD	1,214	12,042	UTILITY BSMT	11,808	UTILITY AREA	330		
61035 0002	1296-1298 CENTRE ST		3,683	UTILITY BSMT	3,683				
61035 0005	1280 CENTRE ST	6,334	7,010	COMM. BSMT	6,810				
61036 0001	808 BEACON ST	6,738		COMM. BSMT	3,168				
61036 0002	796 BEACON ST	3,526	3,844	COMM. BSMT	3,844				
61036 0003	790-794 BEACON ST		6,778	COMM. BSMT	6,778				
61036 0004	780 BEACON ST	2,985		CANOPY	1,199				
61036 0005	776 BEACON ST		3,990						
61036 0006	47-61 LANGLEY RD	21,856		UTILITY BSMT	1,276				
61036 0007	49-63 UNION ST		6,120	COMM. BSMT	4,706	UTILITY BSMT	1,540		
61036 0008	65-73 UNION ST	2,960	2,960	UTILITY BSMT	2,960				
61036 0009	93-105 UNION ST	25,028	13,544	COMM. BSMT	10,603				
61036 0011A	70 UNION ST		2,352	UTILITY BSMT	416				
61036 0011C	50 UNION ST	3,359		UTILITY BSMT	1,500				
61038 0002	74-78 LANGLEY RD	3,527	2,999	COMM. BSMT	2,546				
61038 0003	80 LANGLEY RD	2,585	2,923	COMM. BSMT	2,285				
61038 0004	22-24 UNION ST		2,546	UTILITY BSMT	1,644				
61038 0005	740 BEACON ST			AUTO REPAIR	2,980				
61038 0007	732 BEACON ST			GAS STATION	1,920				
61038 0008	714-724 BEACON ST		15,622	CANOPY	1,764				
62010 0001	1349 CENTRE ST	5,245		COMM. BSMT	263	CANOPY	258	UTILITY BSM	2128
62010 0009	1345 CENTRE ST	2,448		COMM. BSMT	1,214				
62011 0006	1359 CENTRE ST	2,926		COMM. BSMT	1,875	UTILITY BSMT	340		
62011 0007	1365 CENTRE ST			GAS STATION	1,536				
62012 0001	15 CYPRESS ST	10,913		COMM. BSMT	1,180	PARKING DECK	2,626		
62012 0001A	1314 CENTRE ST		3,200	UTILITY BSMT	3,200				

Newton Centre Commercial Gross Building Area									
Parcel	Location	Office	Retail	Other Use	Gross Area	Other Use	Gross Area	Other Use	Gross Area
62012 0005	1330-1340 CENTRE ST	54,211		UTILITY BSMT	25,292				
62013 0009	77 PAUL ST	25,644		PARKING DECK	24,760	COMM. BSMT	640		
64028 0001	1261-1269 CENTRE ST	13,140	8,383	UTILITY BSMT	10,640				
64028 0002	837-847 BEACON ST		7,462	UTILITY BSMT	7,462				
64028 0022	1221-1227 CENTRE ST		2,670	COMM. BSMT	540	UTILITY BSMT	2,130		
64028 0023	1229-1235 CENTRE ST		3,911	COMM. BSMT	1,679				
64028 0024	1239-1243 CENTRE ST		8,171	UTILITY BSMT	6,483				
64028 0025	1247-1249 CENTRE ST		4,640	UTILITY BSMT	4,640				
64028 0026	1251-1253 CENTRE ST		3,896	UTILITY BSMT	3,896				
64028 0028	1255 CENTRE ST	1,715	1,700	UTILITY BSMT	1,715				
64029 0001	1199-1217 CENTRE ST		18,283	COMM. BSMT	8,414				
64029 0002	17PELHAMST17		2,651	COMM. BSMT	380				
64029 0002A	19PELHAMST19		1,065						
64029 0002B	21 PELHAM ST 21		1,065						
64030 0001	1185-1197 CENTRE ST		6,603	UTILITY BSMT	5,679	COMM, BSMT	924		
65002 0001	40 GLEN AVE	27,084		CANOPY	960				
65019 0045	101-239 HERRICKRD 141	8,052		COMM. BSMT	2,684				
61033 0010	195 SUMNER ST			APARTMENTS	36,798				
61035 0006	17-31 HERRICKRD			APARTMENTS	30,474				

City of Newton
Engineering Division

Page _____
Of _____

Date: _____

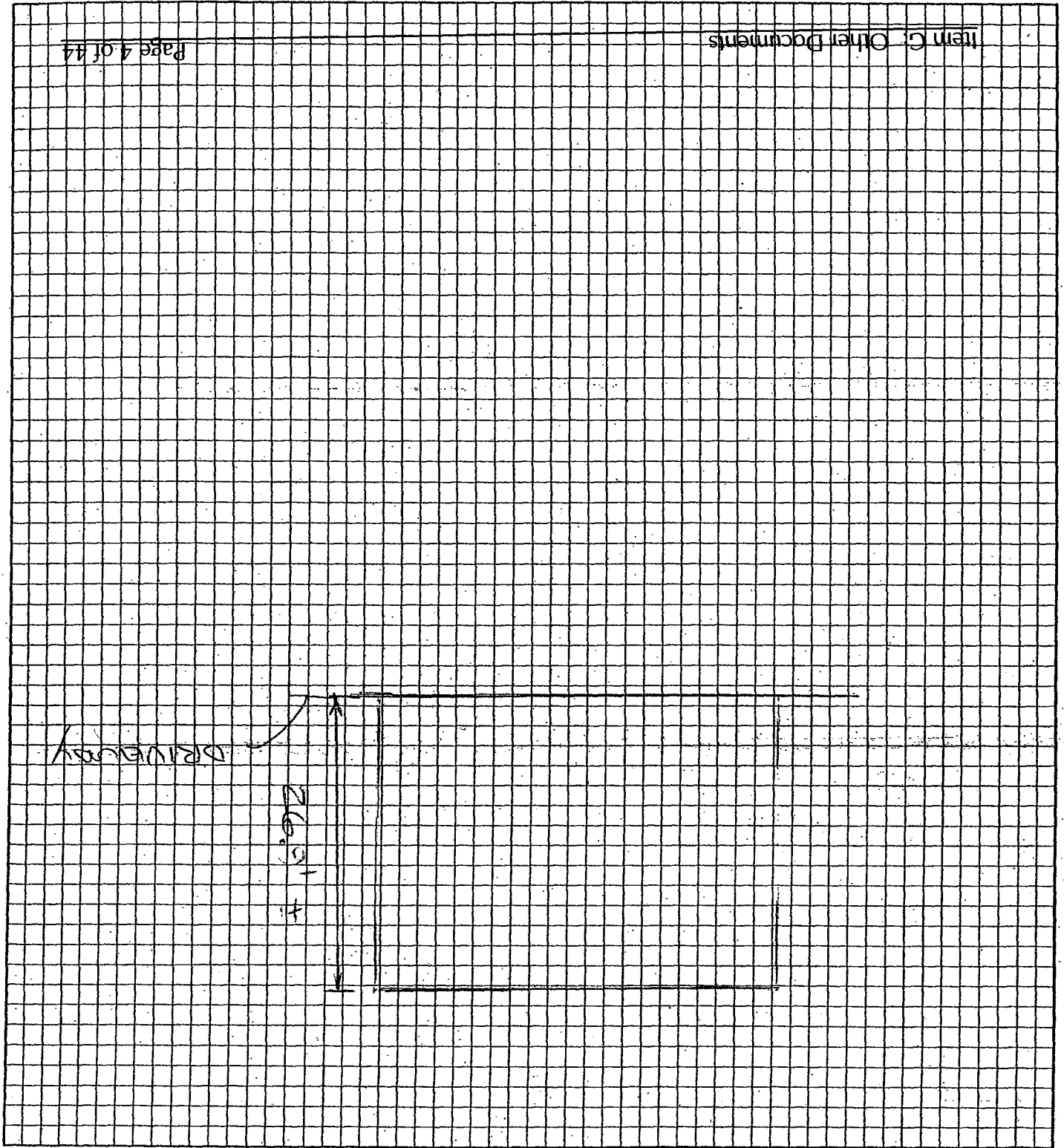
Project: NEWTON CENTRE

Location: 25 WILLOW - FIRE STATION

Calculated By: _____

Checked By: _____

Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT



City of Newton
Engineering Division

Page _____ Of _____

Date: _____

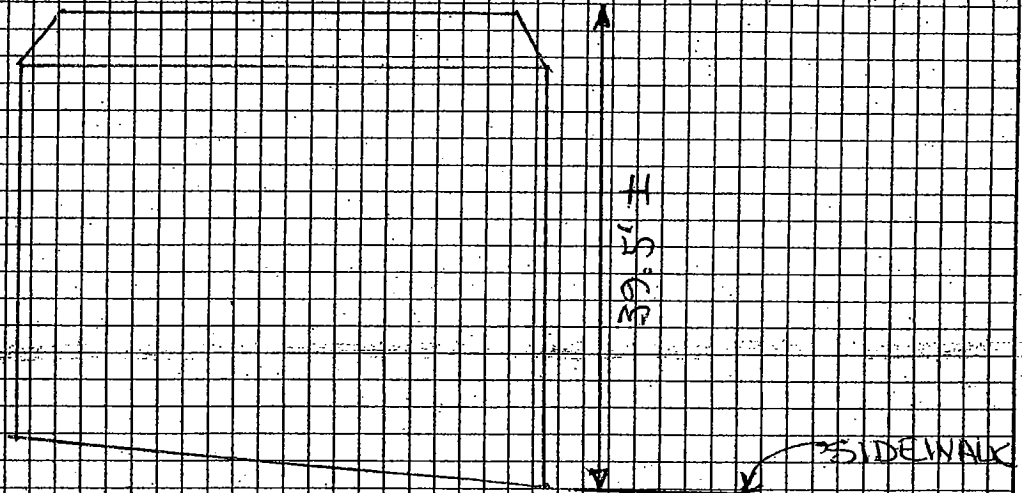
Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT

Project: NEWTON CENTRE

Calculated By: _____

Location: 47-61 LANGLEY

Checked By: _____



City of Newton
Engineering Division

Page _____ Of _____

Casselman House

Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT

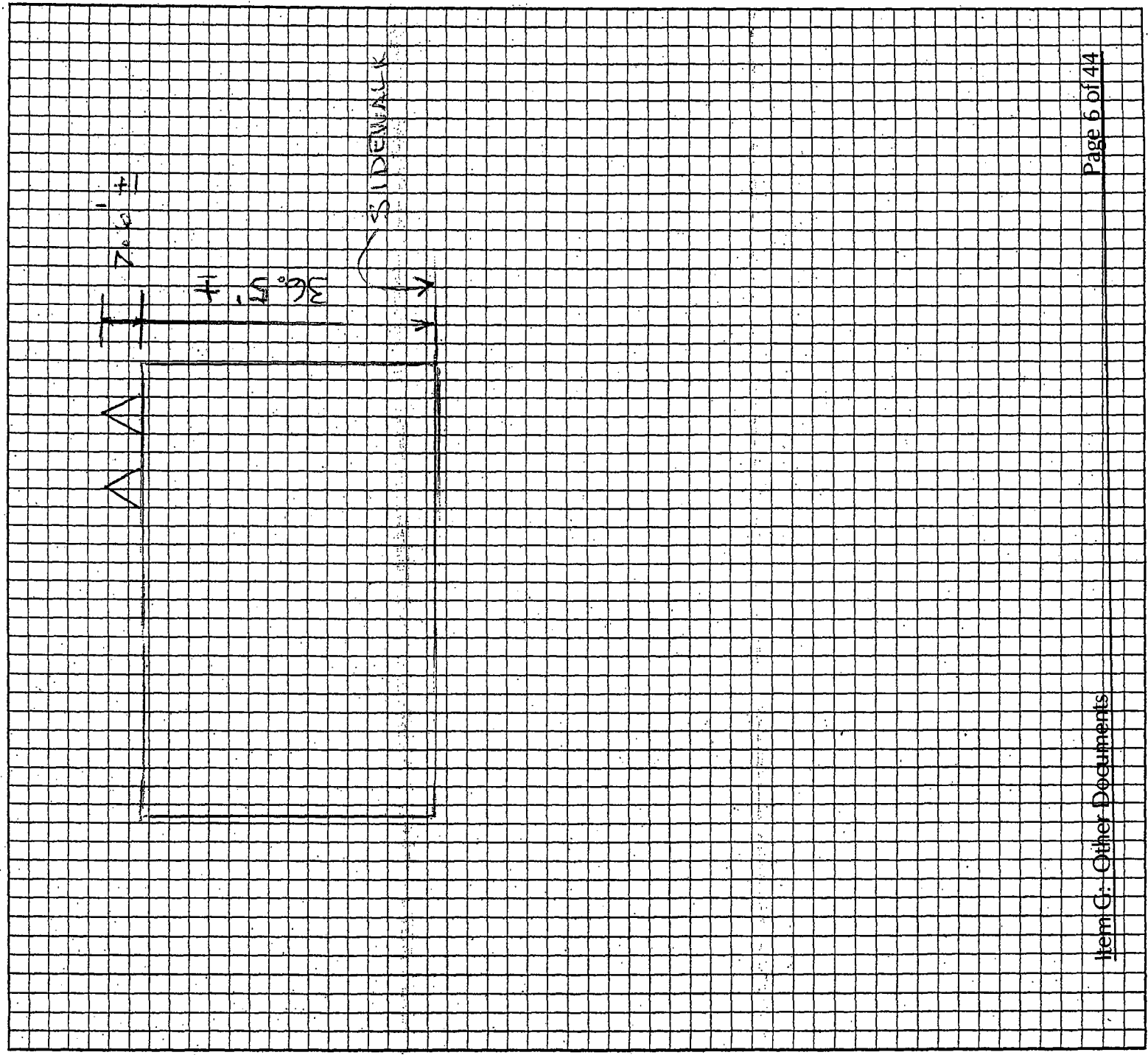
Date: _____

Project: NANTON CENTRE

Calculated By: _____

Location: 195 SUMNER

Checked By: _____



City of Newton
Engineering Division

Page _____ Of _____

Date: Church/Office Building

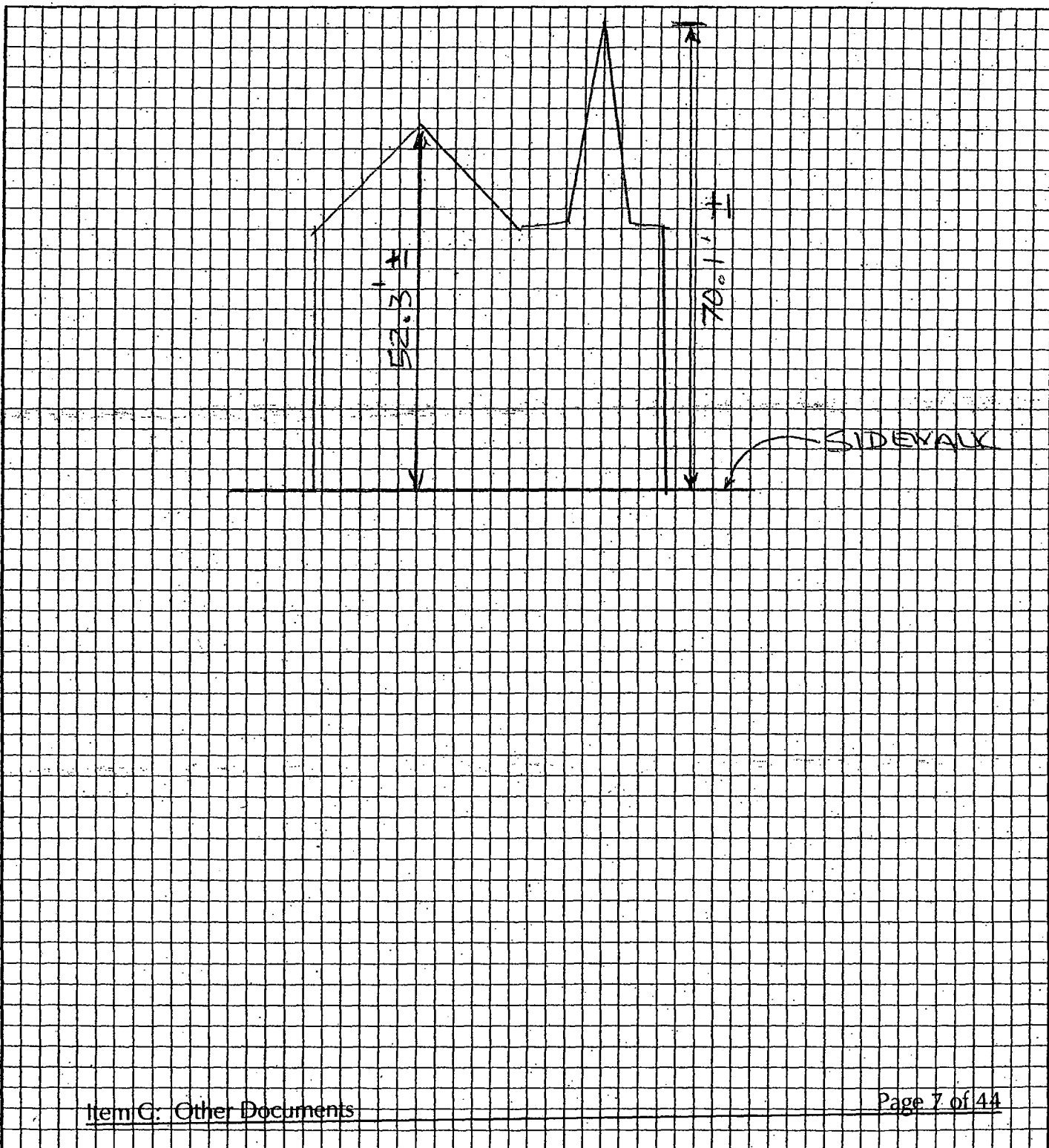
Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT

Project: NEWTON CENTRE

Calculated By: _____

Location: 10 LANGLEY

Checked By: _____



City of Newton
Engineering Division

Page _____ Of _____

Date: Union St
Big Sky Bakery

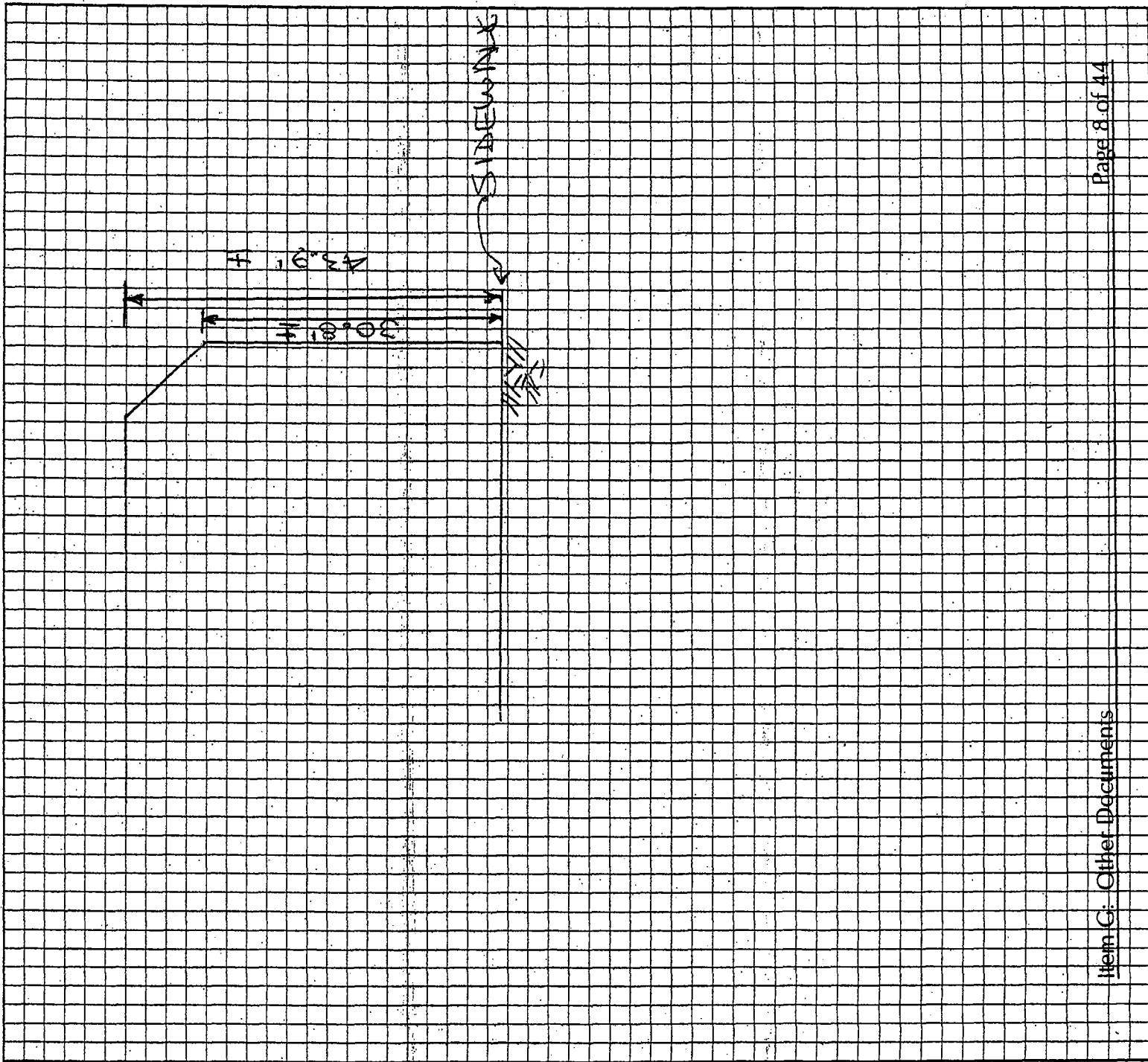
Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT

Project: NEWTON CENTRE

Calculated By: _____

Location: 93-105 UNION

Checked By: _____



City of Newton
Engineering Division

Page _____ Of _____

Date: _____

Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT

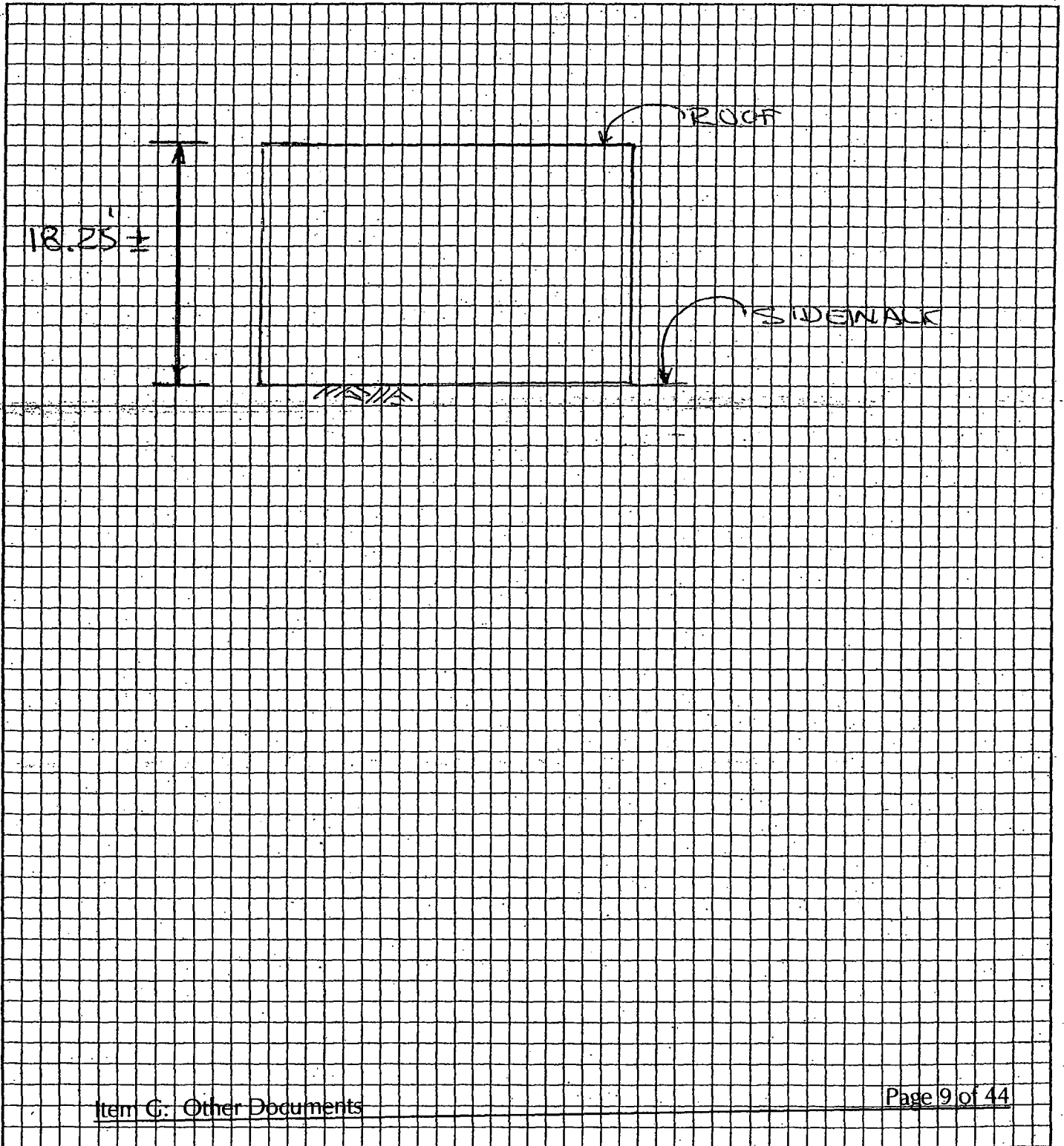
Project: NEWTON CENTRE

Calculated By: _____

30 LANGLEY RD

Location: JOHNYS LUNCH

Checked By: _____



City of Newton
Engineering Division

Rosenfelds

Date: _____

Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT

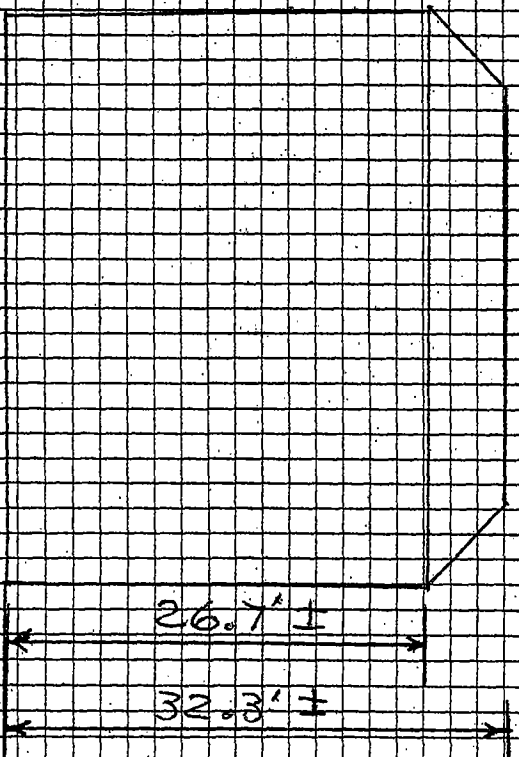
Page _____ Of _____

Project: NEWTON CENTRE

Calculated By: _____

Location: 1280 CENTRE

Checked By: _____



TOP OF
FOUNDATION

City of Newton
Engineering Division

Page _____ Of _____

Date: Citizen's Bank

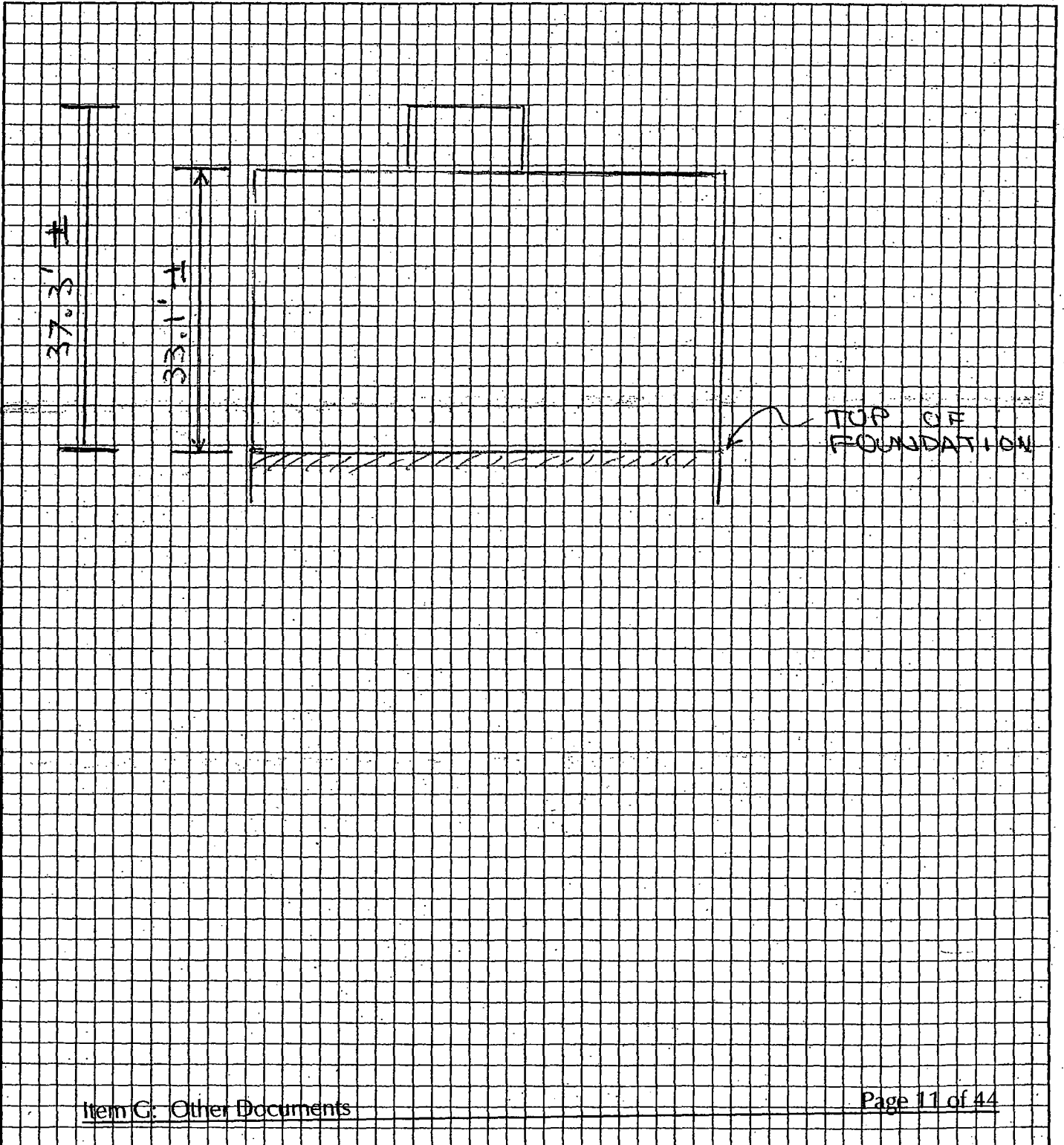
Subject: BUILDING HEIGHT

Project: NEWTON CENTRE

Calculated By: _____

Location: 1188 CENTRE ST

Checked By: _____





DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES



**Massachusetts
Department of Housing
and Community
Development
100 Cambridge Street,
Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114**

**617-573-1100
www.mass.gov/dhcd**

Business Improvement Districts (BID)

Fact Sheet

Business Improvement Districts (BID) are special districts in which property owners vote to initiate, manage and finance supplemental services above and beyond the baseline of services already provided by their local city or town governments. To finance these services a special assessment, or common area fee, is levied only on property within the district. The goal of a BID is to restore or promote business activity in targeted commercial areas. The assessments are collected and expended within the district for a range of management, marketing and economic development services and programs including:

- ◇ District Management Services,
- ◇ Maintenance and Security,
- ◇ Promotion and Marketing Services,
- ◇ Business Services, and
- ◇ Physical Improvements and Property Management.

A BID creates a stable local management structure that provides a sustainable funding source for the revitalization and long-term maintenance of downtowns and commercial centers. There are three primary advantages of a BID: 1) the ability to provide additional and enhanced services that improve the business environment; 2) the capability of professional management of retail and commercial services similar to those offered in a mall that enhance the district and strengthen a municipality's economic capacity; and 3) a predictable and reliable source of funding.

How it Works:

Communities are authorized to establish BIDs under M.G.L. Chapter 400. A BID must be a contiguous geographic area in which at least 75% of the land is zoned or used for commercial, retail, industrial, or mixed uses. A BID is established through a local petition and public hearing process. The petition must be signed by the owners of at least 60% of the real property and at least 51% of the assessed valuation of the real property within the proposed BID. The petition must also include delineation of the BID boundaries, a proposed improvement plan, a budget and an assessment/fee structure. The BID petition must be forwarded by the municipality to DHCD.

***Business Improvement Districts (BID)
Fact Sheet - Page Two***

All property owners within the BID are assessed a fee in addition to their real property taxes to fund the supplemental services and programs. The collector-treasurer of the municipality collects the fees and distributes them to the management entity designated by the BID. The amount of the fee is established by each BID but cannot annually exceed on-half of one percent (.05) of the total assessed value of the real property owned by participating members of the district. The BID has the option to limit or cap this maximum fee on individual properties or the total annual revenue generated by the BID. The municipality may exempt owner-occupied residential, agricultural or tax exempt properties from the BID fee.

For More Information:

***Please contact DHCD's Division of Community Services at
617-573-1400. Division staff is also available to provide
technical assistance to communities considering the establishment of a
BID to support their downtown revitalization activities and to ensure
compliance with statutory documents***

djm
January 2007

SUMMARY OF M.G.L. CHAPTER 40R

SMART GROWTH ZONING DISTRICTS

PASSED INTO LAW AS PART OF THE FY 2005 BUDGET

(includes a summary of related sections passed as part of the same budget)

**Prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111**

July 22, 2004

Housing production within the Commonwealth has not kept pace with the growing number of households looking for an affordable place to live. To help meet this demand, the Commonwealth adopted Chapter 40R within the General Laws allowing municipalities to encourage housing production that is aligned with the principles of "smart growth." Communities doing so may obtain funds through housing incentive payments.

This document summarizes the new law and related sections passed as part of the FY 2005 budget. We hope you find it useful. Please remember that reading a summary of legislation is not a substitute for reading the legislation itself. The legislation is more detailed and may answer questions the summary cannot.

M.G.L. Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Districts

Section 1. Purpose

It is the purpose of this chapter to encourage smart growth and increased housing production in Massachusetts. Smart growth is a principle of land development that emphasizes mixing land uses, increases the availability of affordable housing by creating a range of housing opportunities in neighborhoods, takes advantage of compact design, fosters distinctive and attractive communities, preserves open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas, strengthens existing communities, provides a variety of transportation choices, makes development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective and encourages community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Section 2. Definitions

This section defines terms used in the new law. A summary of critical definitions includes:

- **“Affordable housing,”** housing affordable to those earning less than 80% of the median income, and subject to an affordability restriction lasting for at least 30 years;
- **“Approving Authority,”** a unit of town or city government designated by the municipality to review and approve projects.
- **“Comprehensive housing plan,”** plan prepared by a municipality assessing housing needs within the municipality and strategies to address those needs;
- **“Department,”** the department of housing and community development;
- **“Developable land area,”** that part of the smart growth zoning district that can be feasibly developed as residential or mixed-use development, excluding land already substantially developed, parks, open space, and wetlands, and including land with underutilized residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional buildings that could be recycled or converted into residential or mixed use.
- **“Eligible locations,”** (1) areas near transit stations, including rapid transit, commuter rail, and bus and ferry terminals, (2) areas of concentrated development, including town and city centers, other existing commercial districts in cities and towns, and existing rural village districts, or (3) areas that by virtue of their infrastructure, transportation access, existing underutilized facilities, and/or location make highly suitable locations for residential or mixed use smart growth zoning districts;
- **“Multi-family housing,”** apartment or condominium units in buildings with more than three units;
- **“New construction,”** construction of new housing, substantial rehabilitation of existing buildings, or conversion to residential use;
- **“Smart growth zoning district,”** a zoning district adopted by a municipality under this statute that is superimposed over one or more zoning districts in an eligible location, within which a developer may elect to either develop a project in accordance with requirements of the smart growth zoning district ordinance or develop a project in accordance with requirements of the underlying zoning district.

Section 3. Authority

A municipality may adopt a “smart growth zoning district,” in accordance with the provisions of Section 5, chapter 40A, in any eligible location allowing for primary residential use as-of-right and also permitting businesses, commercial and other uses consistent with primary residential use. Smart growth zoning districts may include areas eligible for Tax Increment Financing (“TIF”) and District Improvement Financing (“DIF”).

Section 4. Determination of Eligibility

Before adopting a smart growth zoning district, a municipality will apply to the department, which has 60 days to make a preliminary determination of whether the applicant would be eligible for the financial and other incentives in this chapter. The department will communicate this determination via a letter of eligibility. The

department may also advise the applicant of deficiencies in the application. If the municipality adopts the district, along with any changes recommended by the department, the department has 30 days to issue a final approval.

Section 5. Application Requirements

To be eligible for a smart growth zoning district, the municipality must submit to the department an application that:

- identifies the boundaries of the proposed district;
- describes the developable land area within the proposed district;
- identifies other residential development opportunities for infill housing and the residential reuse of existing buildings and under-utilized buildings within already developed areas;
- includes a comprehensive housing plan (see Section 8);
- includes a copy of the proposed smart growth district ordinance or by-law; and
- establishes that the proposed district satisfies the minimum requirements of a smart growth zoning district (see Section 6).

Section 6. Minimum Requirements of Zoning District

(a) The minimum requirements of a smart growth zoning district include the following:

1. The proposed district must be determined an “**eligible location**” (see definition in Section 2).
2. The zoning ordinance must provide for residential use to **permit a mix of housing** such as for families, individuals, persons with special needs, or the elderly.
3. **Housing density** allowed in the developable land area of a proposed district must be at least:
 - 20 units per acre for multi-family housing,
 - 8 units per acre for single-family homes, and
 - 12 units per acre for 2 and 3 family buildings.
4. The zoning ordinance for each proposed district will:
 - provide that **not less than 20%** of the residential units constructed in projects of more than 12 units will be **affordable**, and
 - contain mechanisms to ensure that **not less than 20%** of the total residential units constructed in each district will be **affordable**.
5. The zoning ordinance must **permit infill housing** on existing vacant lots and additional housing units in existing buildings, consistent with neighborhood building and use patterns, and consistent with building, fire, and safety codes.
6. Development in the district will **not be subject to any limitation on the issuance of building permits for residential uses** or any local moratorium on the issuance of such permits.

7. **No restrictions on age or any other occupancy restrictions** in the district as a whole. This provision does not preclude the development of specific projects that may be exclusively for the elderly, the disabled, or for assisted living, provided that not less than 25% of the housing units in such a project will be affordable housing.
8. Full compliance with federal, state and local **fair housing laws**.
9. The proposed **district may not exceed 15% of the total land area** in the municipality, except that the department may approve a larger land area if such an approval serves the goals and objectives of the chapter.
10. **The total land area of all approved smart growth zoning districts in the municipality may not exceed 25% of the total land area** in the municipality. (Note: unlike #9, above, this provision may not be waived.)
11. Proposed housing **density will not overburden infrastructure** as it exists or may be practicably upgraded.
12. The proposed zoning ordinance must **define the manner of review for individual projects** by the approving authority in accordance with Section 11 (see below) and specify the procedure for such review, in accordance with the regulations of the department.

(b-e) Within the zoning ordinance the municipality may:

- modify or eliminate dimensional standards;
- designate a limited percentage of the developable land area as dedicated perpetual open space through the use of a conservation restriction or other means; said open space will not be considered part of the developable land area for density calculation purposes.
- provide for mixed use development;
- the district may encompass an existing historic district or establish an historic district within an approved district; and
- require more affordability than required by this chapter provided that affordability thresholds do not unduly restrict opportunities for development.

(f) Municipalities with fewer than 10,000 persons, for hardship shown, may gain approval from the department for a smart growth zoning district with lower densities than provided in this chapter.

(g) Any amendment or repeal of the zoning for an approved district will not be effective without the written approval by the department.

(h) Nothing in this chapter will affect a municipality's authority to amend its zoning ordinances under chapter 40A, so long as the changes do not affect the smart growth zoning district.

Section 7. Certificate of Compliance

Each year the department will send a certificate of compliance to all municipalities with approved districts where it has been verified by the city or town that the zoning district has been adopted, that no previous certificate has been revoked, that the district is being reasonably developed consistent with the density and affordability requirements of this chapter, and that projects have not been unreasonably denied by the approving authority within the municipality.

Section 8. Comprehensive Housing Plan

When applying for a determination of eligibility, the municipality will submit a comprehensive housing plan that estimates the projected number of housing units of new construction (see definition in Section 2) that could be built within the proposed district. Existing comprehensive housing plans may be submitted with additions relating to the newly proposed district.

Section 9. Housing Incentive Payments

Upon approval of the district, municipalities are entitled to zoning incentive payments for housing creation. Based on number of units of new construction (see definition in Section 2) projected in the smart growth zoning district, payments will range from:

- \$10,000 for up to 20 units;
- \$75,000 for 21-100 units;
- \$200,000 for 101-200 units;
- \$350,000 for 201-500 units; to
- \$600,000 for 501 or more units of housing.

Additionally, a one-time density bonus of \$3,000 for each unit of new construction will be awarded upon issuance of a building permit. When awarding discretionary funds, the department and the executive offices of environmental affairs, transportation, and administration and finance will use a methodology that favors municipalities with approved smart growth zoning district, or other zoning policies that encourage affordable housing production.

(See Section 14 regarding repayment if no construction occurs.)

Section 10. Design Standards

Design standards may be adopted to ensure that the physical character of development within the smart growth zoning district will complement the adjacent buildings and structures, and not conflict with the comprehensive housing plan or any master plan for the community. The design standards may not add unreasonable costs to residential or mixed-use development, or unreasonably impair economic feasibility of proposed projects.

Section 11. Municipal Project Review

- The municipality may prescribe the **contents of an application** for project approval. It may require payment of reasonable consulting fees for peer review. It may refer applications for review by municipal entities in addition to the approving authority and such entities will have 60 days to comment.
- **Zoning in effect** at the time an application is submitted will govern the review of that application while it is being processed, during any appeal, and for three years after approval. If an application is denied, zoning will remain in effect with respect to any further application for two years after denial unless the applicant chooses otherwise.
- The approving authority will hold a **public hearing** consistent with the provision of Section 11 of Chapter 40A. The approving authority will make a decision within 120 days of filing or it is deemed approved.
- **Project approval is subject only to those conditions** that are necessary to ensure compliance with the smart growth zoning district ordinance and to mitigate only those impacts that are extraordinarily adverse to nearby properties.
- **A court may overrule approval of a project** only if it finds that the approving authority abused its discretion in approving the project. A plaintiff seeking to reverse a project approval must post a bond.
- In any **court appeal of a project denial** by an approving authority, the approving authority will have the burden of justifying its decision by substantial evidence in the record.

Section 12. Administration of Smart Growth Zoning Program

The department of housing and community development will serve as the administrator of the smart growth zoning district program. It will also be responsible for an annual review and report of data no later than November 15 of each year regarding the status of proposed smart growth zoning districts, the number of approved districts, development having taken place in districts to date, and monies paid to municipalities.

Section 13. Existing Zoning Districts

An existing zoning district may gain approval as a smart growth zoning district and receive incentive payments if it meets the requirements of this chapter. The application process will be consistent with that of a new smart growth zoning district. If such districts are approved, the community will not be eligible for the zoning incentive payment, but will be eligible, after the date of approval, for the one-time density bonus payment, and will be eligible for favorable review in the awarding of certain state funds. (See Section 9 for further information on these incentives.)

Section 14. Repayment

If no construction in the smart growth zoning district has taken place within three years of the date of the zoning incentive payment (see Section 9), the municipality must repay all monies paid to it under this chapter.

RELATED SECTIONS

M.G.L. Chapter 10, Section 35BB Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund

This section creates a Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund, funded by monies from the sale of surplus land, appropriations, or sanctions on communities. Without requiring further appropriation, available funds are to be disbursed by the department in accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 40R.

M.G.L. Chapter 26, Section 548 Funding of Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund

The first \$25,000,000 of any proceeds realized from the sale of surplus state properties will be deposited into the General Fund. The second \$25,000,000 of any such proceeds will be deposited into the Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund. Any additional proceeds will be deposited into the Commonwealth Stabilization Fund. (Note: As a result of this section, funds from the sale of surplus state properties will enter the Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund *only* if annual sale proceeds exceed \$25 million, and the amount entering the Trust Fund cannot exceed \$25 million per year.)

Outside Section 367 Impact Study

The department, in consultation with the departments of education and revenue, will study the impact of the adoption of smart growth zoning districts on the educational systems of participating municipalities. The department will report to the Legislature on this study no later than July 1, 2006. The report will recommend a formula for ascertaining any actual additional net public school costs to which municipalities may become subject as a result of the adoption of smart growth zoning districts.

THE GENERAL LAWS OF MASSACHUSETTS

PART I. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

TITLE VII. CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS CHAPTER 40Q. DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT FINANCING Chapter 40Q: Section 2. Development districts

Section 2. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any city or town by vote of its town meeting, town council or city council with the approval of the mayor where required by law may designate development districts within the boundaries of the city or town provided, however, that: (1) a development district may consist of 1 or more parcels or lots of land, whether or not contiguous, or 1 or more buildings or structures, whether or not adjacent, on 1 or more parcels of land, provided that the total area of all development districts shall not exceed 25 per cent of the total area of a city or town; and provided that the boundaries of a development district may be altered only after meeting the requirements for adoption under this subsection; (2) the development district has been certified as an approved development district by the economic assistance coordinating council established in section 3B of chapter 23 A and pursuant to regulations adopted by said council. The economic assistance coordinating council shall find, based on the information submitted to it in support of the designation of the development district by the city or town and additional investigation as the economic assistance coordinating council shall make, and incorporate into its minutes, that the designation of the development district is consistent with the requirements of this section and will further the public purpose of encouraging increased residential, industrial and commercial activity in the commonwealth.

(b) The city or town shall adopt a development program for each development district. The program shall be adopted at the same time as the district, as part of the district adoption proceedings or, if at a different time, in the same manner as adoption of the district, with the same certification requirements of subsection (a). Once approved, the program shall be altered or amended only after meeting the requirements for adoption.

(c) Within development districts and consistent with the development program, the city or town may acquire, construct, reconstruct, improve, preserve, alter, extend, operate, maintain or promote development intended to meet the objectives of the development program. In addition to the powers granted by any other law, for the purpose of carrying on a project as authorized by this chapter, a city or town may:

(1) incur indebtedness as hereinafter provided and pledge tax increments and other project revenues for repayment thereof;

(2) create a department, designate an existing department, board officer, agency, municipal housing or redevelopment authority of the city or town or enter into a contractual agreement with a private entity to administer the activities authorized by this chapter;

(3) make and enter into all contracts and agreements necessary in order to carry out the development program;

- (4) receive from the federal government or the commonwealth loans or grants for, or in aid of, a project and receive contributions from any other source to defray project costs;
- (5) purchase or acquire by eminent domain pursuant to chapter 79 or chapter 80A, insofar as those laws may be applicable, and pursuant to all preliminary requirements prescribed by law, such property or interests therein within a district as the city or town may deem necessary in order to carry out the development program; provided, however, that any taking of property by eminent domain for any purpose for which the taking by the city or town could not be made in the absence of this chapter shall be authorized by a two-thirds vote as defined in section 1 of chapter 44;
- (6) make relocation payments to persons, businesses or organizations that may be displaced as a result of carrying out the development program;
- (7) clear and improve property acquired by it pursuant to the development program and construct public facilities thereon, or contract for the construction, development, redevelopment, rehabilitation, remodeling, alteration or repair of such property;
- (8) cause parks, playgrounds or schools, water or sewer drainage facilities or any other public improvements that it is otherwise authorized to undertake, to be laid out, constructed or furnished in connection with the development program;
- (9) lay out, construct, alter, relocate, change the grade of, make specific repairs upon or discontinue public ways and sidewalks in or adjacent to the development district;
- (10) cause private ways, sidewalks, ways for vehicular travel and similar improvements to be constructed within the development district for the particular use of the development district or those dwelling or working therein;
- (11) adopt ordinances or by-laws under section 5 of chapter 40 A, or repeal or modify the ordinances or by-laws or establish exceptions to existing ordinances and by-laws, regulating the design, construction and use of buildings;
- (12) sell, mortgage, lease as lessor, transfer or dispose of any property or interest therein acquired by it pursuant to the project plan for development, redevelopment or rehabilitation in accordance with the development program;
- (13) invest project revenue as hereinafter provided; and
- (14) do all things reasonably necessary or convenient to carry out the powers granted in this chapter.

The General Laws of Massachusetts

Search the Laws

PART I. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

TITLE VII. CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS

Go To:
[Next Section](#)
[Previous Section](#)
[Chapter Table of Contents](#)
[MGL Search Page](#)
[General Court Home](#)
[Mass.gov](#)

CHAPTER 40Q. DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT FINANCING

Chapter 40Q: Section 2. Development districts

Section 2. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any city or town by vote of its town meeting, town council or city council with the approval of the mayor where required by law may designate development districts within the boundaries of the city or town provided, however, that: (1) a development district may consist of 1 or more parcels or lots of land, whether or not contiguous, or 1 or more buildings or structures, whether or not adjacent, on 1 or more parcels of land, provided that the total area of all development districts shall not exceed 25 per cent of the total area of a city or town; and provided that the boundaries of a development district may be altered only after meeting the requirements for adoption under this subsection; (2) the development district has been certified as an approved development district by the economic assistance coordinating council established in section 3B of chapter 23A and pursuant to regulations adopted by said council. The economic assistance coordinating council shall find, based on the information submitted to it in support of the designation of the development district by the city or town and additional investigation as the economic assistance coordinating council shall make, and incorporate into its minutes, that the designation of the development district is consistent with the requirements of this section and will further the public purpose of encouraging increased residential, industrial and commercial activity in the commonwealth.

(b) The city or town shall adopt a development program for each development district. The program shall be adopted at the same time as the district, as part of the district adoption proceedings or, if at a different time, in the same manner as adoption of the district, with the same certification requirements of subsection (a). Once approved, the program shall be altered or amended only after meeting the requirements for adoption.

(c) Within development districts and consistent with the development program, the city or town may acquire, construct, reconstruct, improve, preserve, alter, extend, operate, maintain or promote development intended to meet the objectives of the development program. In addition to the powers granted by any other law, for the purpose of carrying on a project as authorized by this chapter, a city or town may:

- (1) incur indebtedness as hereinafter provided and pledge tax increments and other project revenues for repayment thereof;
- (2) create a department, designate an existing department, board officer, agency, municipal housing or redevelopment authority of the city or town or enter into a contractual agreement with a private entity to administer the activities authorized by this chapter;
- (3) make and enter into all contracts and agreements necessary in order to carry out the development program;
- (4) receive from the federal government or the commonwealth loans or grants for, or in aid of, a project and receive contributions from any other source to defray project costs;
- (5) purchase or acquire by eminent domain pursuant to chapter 79 or chapter 80A, insofar as those laws may be applicable, and pursuant to all preliminary requirements prescribed by law, such property or interests therein

[Item G: Other Documents](#)

Page 23 of 44

within a district as the city or town may deem necessary in order to carry out the development program; provided, however, that any taking of property by eminent domain for any purpose for which the taking by the city or town could not be made in the absence of this chapter shall be authorized by a two-thirds vote as defined in section 1 of chapter 44;

(6) make relocation payments to persons, businesses or organizations that may be displaced as a result of carrying out the development program;

(7) clear and improve property acquired by it pursuant to the development program and construct public facilities thereon, or contract for the construction, development, redevelopment, rehabilitation, remodeling, alteration or repair of such property;

(8) cause parks, playgrounds or schools, water or sewer drainage facilities or any other public improvements that it is otherwise authorized to undertake, to be laid out, constructed or furnished in connection with the development program;

(9) lay out, construct, alter, relocate, change the grade of, make specific repairs upon or discontinue public ways and sidewalks in or adjacent to the development district;

(10) cause private ways, sidewalks, ways for vehicular travel and similar improvements to be constructed within the development district for the particular use of the development district or those dwelling or working therein;

(11) adopt ordinances or by-laws under section 5 of chapter 40A, or repeal or modify the ordinances or by-laws or establish exceptions to existing ordinances and by-laws, regulating the design, construction and use of buildings;

(12) sell, mortgage, lease as lessor, transfer or dispose of any property or interest therein acquired by it pursuant to the project plan for development, redevelopment or rehabilitation in accordance with the development program;

(13) invest project revenue as hereinafter provided; and

(14) do all things reasonably necessary or convenient to carry out the powers granted in this chapter.

Chapter 40R and 40S Explained: Reaping the Benefits of Compact Development

Chapters 40R and 40S serve to reimburse cities and towns for the additional costs of educating new school-age children in smart growth districts. The combination of 40R and 40S now tops the menu of choices available to communities seeking more efficient, fiscally stable growth.

40R Cities and towns may establish special zoning overlay districts that allow densities of 8 units/acre for single family homes, 12 units/acre for townhouses, and 20 units/acre for condominiums and apartments. The zoning must require that 20% of the district be affordable homes, and it should allow "mixed use" – the combination of residential, office and retail within close proximity. The location of these districts helps consolidate growth and cut down on dispersal: in town centers, downtowns, near a transit station, on unused industrial land or in other locations municipalities have deemed appropriate for higher density housing. Assistance is available for writing a bylaw and for planning and design. Well-designed districts create a distinctive sense of place and fulfill a significant market demand for convenience, while reducing car trips and preserving open space elsewhere in the community. In return for adopting the zoning and streamlining the development process for 40R districts, cities and towns can get between \$10,000 and \$600,000 in state funding, plus an additional \$3,000 for every new home created.



40S Additional state funding will also be directed to cities and towns that establish a 40R district, to cover the costs of educating any school-age children who move into such districts. This legislation was in response to the common concern that new housing was costly in terms of municipal finances, given the imbalance of tax revenues and service costs. Qualifying communities will be reimbursed for the net cost of educating students living in new housing in smart growth districts.

The reimbursement equals the cost of educating students living in new housing in smart growth districts less an amount equal to the sum of: (a) new property and excise taxes in the smart growth district multiplied by the average percent of total local spending on education across the commonwealth (about 52%), and (b) any increases in other state education funding that is directly a result of these new students. As a practical matter, foundation communities are not eligible for 40S funding. This funding is available starting in 2008.

Contact

For more information contact Donald Schmidt, Department of Housing and Community Development, 617.573.1363
Donald.Schmidt@ocd.state.ma.us or visit DHCD's website at www.mass.gov/dhcd/40R/

Chapter 40R: Purpose, Program Overview: 760 CMR 59.00 establish rules, standards, and procedures for the Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Program created by M.G.L. c.40R, added by Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004. The Department of Housing and Community Development (the "Department") is the regulatory agency for the program and is authorized to issue regulations to explain and to provide specifics of the program and its operation. It is the purpose of M.G.L. c.40R and 760 CMR 59.00

Item G: Other Documents Page 25 of 44

RELATED LINKS

- [Office of Commonwealth Development \(OCD\)](#)
- [Executive Office of Environmental Affairs \(EOEA\)](#)
- [Executive Office of Transportation \(EOT\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources](#)

DIVISIONS

- [Public Housing and Rental Assistance](#)
- [Community Services](#)
- [Housing Development](#)

encourage smart growth and increased housing production in Massachusetts. "Smart growth" is a principle of land development that: (a) increases the availability of affordable housing by creating a range of housing opportunities in neighborhoods; (b) emphasizes mixing land uses; (c) takes advantage of compact design; (d) fosters distinctive and attractive communities; (e) preserves open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas; (f) strengthens existing communities; (g) provides a variety of transportation choices; (h) makes development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective; and (i) encourages community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

760 CMR 59.00 describes the process by which municipalities may propose, for review and approval by the Department, new smart growth zoning provisions that allow the as-of-right development of



high-density housing and mixed-use development within zoning overlay districts. To be approvable, overlay districts shall be located near transit stations, in existing city and town centers, commercial districts, and other areas of concentrated development, and in other eligible smart growth locations. The smart growth zoning for an overlay district must require that at least 20% of the housing developed will be affordable. Projects must be developable as-of-right under the smart growth zoning, subject only

to the review of plans and the application of design standards by a local approving authority.

The proposed smart growth zoning shall be submitted to the Department for its preliminary approval, after which it may be adopted by the municipality. Once the municipality has adopted the smart growth zoning and received final approval from the Department, it becomes eligible for two types of payment from a trust fund administered by the Commonwealth. First, the municipality receives an immediate incentive payment, based upon the projected number of additional new units that could be built under the smart growth zoning in excess of what would previously have been allowed as-of-right through the underlying zoning. Second, the municipality receives a bonus payment upon the issuance of a building permit for each such additional unit.

Within the boundaries of an overlay district, a developer may elect either to develop a project in accordance with the requirements of the applicable smart growth zoning adopted under M.G.L. c.40R and 760 CMR 59.00, or to develop a project in accordance with requirements of the applicable underlying zoning adopted under M.G.L. c.40A. Nothing in M.G.L. c.40R and 760 CMR 59.00 shall affect a municipality's authority under M.G.L. c.40A to amend any provision of its local zoning ordinance or by-law, including the underlying zoning applicable within any area that lies within the boundaries of the smart growth zoning district.

Chapter 40S Contact

For additional information regarding Chapter 40S, contact Rick Kingsley at the Department of Revenue, (617) 626-2376.

Chapter 40R and 40S Explained: Reaping the Benefits of Compact Development

Chapters 40R and 40S serve to reimburse cities and towns for the additional costs of educating new school-age children in smart growth districts. The combination of 40R and 40S now tops the menu of choices available to communities seeking more efficient, fiscally stable growth.

40 R

Cities and towns may establish special zoning overlay districts that allow densities of 8 units/acre for single-family homes, 12 units/acre for townhouses, and 20 units/acre for condominiums and apartments. The zoning must require that 20% of the district be affordable homes, and it should allow "mixed use" – the combination of residential, office and retail within close proximity. The location of these districts helps consolidate growth and cut down on dispersal: in town centers, downtowns, near a transit station, on unused industrial land or in other locations I municipalities have deemed appropriate for higher density housing. Assistance is available for writing a bylaw and for planning and design. Well designed districts create a distinctive sense of place and fulfill a significant market demand for I convenience, while reducing car trips and preserving open space elsewhere in the community. In return for adopting the zoning and streamlining the development process for 40R] districts, cities and towns can get between \$10,000 and \$600,000 in state funding, plus an additional \$3,000 for every new home created.

40 S

Additional state funding will also be directed to cities and towns that establish a 40R district, to cover the costs of educating any school-age children who move into such districts. This legislation was in response to the common concern that new housing was costly in terms of municipal finances, given the imbalance of tax revenues and service costs. Qualifying communities will be reimbursed for the net cost of educating students living in new housing in smart growth districts.

The reimbursement equals the cost of educating students living in new housing in smart growth districts less an amount equal to the sum of: (a) new property and excise taxes in the smart growth district multiplied by the average percent of total local spending on education across the commonwealth (about 52%), and (b) any increases in other state education funding that is directly a result of these new students. As a practical matter, foundation communities are not eligible for 40S funding. This funding is available starting in 2008.

Contact

For more information, contact Donald Schmidt, Department of Housing and Community Development, 617.573.1363 Donald.Schmidt@ocd.state.ma.us or visit DHCD's website at www.mass.gov/dhcd/40R/

Chapter 40R: Purpose, Program Overview: 760 CMR 59.00 establish rules, standards, and procedures for the Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Program created by M.G.L C.40R, added by Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004. The Department of Housing and Community Development (the "Department") is the regulatory agency for the program and is authorized to issue regulations to explain and to provide specifics of the program and its operation. It is the purpose of M.G.L. C.40R and 760 CMR 59.00 to encourage smart growth and increased housing production in Massachusetts. "Smart Growth" is a principle of land development that: (a) increases the availability of affordable housing by creating a range of housing opportunities in neighborhoods; (b)

emphasizes mixing land uses; (c) takes advantage of compact design; (d) fosters distinctive and attractive communities; (e) preserves open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas; (f) strengthens existing communities; (g) provides a variety of transportation choices; (h) makes development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective; and (i) encourages community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

760 CMR 59.00 describes the process by which municipalities may propose, for review and approval by the Department, new smart growth zoning provisions that allow the as-of-right development of high-density housing and mixed-use development within zoning overlay districts. To be approvable, overlay districts shall be located near transit stations, in existing city and town centers, commercial districts, and other areas of concentrated development, and in other eligible smart growth locations. The smart growth zoning for an overlay district must require that at least 20% of the housing developed will be affordable. Projects must be developable as-of-right under the smart growth zoning, subject only to the review of plans and the application of design standards by a local approving authority.

The proposed smart growth zoning shall be submitted to the Department for its preliminary approval, after which it may be adopted by the municipality. Once the municipality has adopted the smart growth zoning and received final approval from the Department, it becomes eligible for two types of payment from a trust fund administered by the Commonwealth. First, the municipality receives an immediate incentive payment, based upon the projected number of additional new units that could be built under the smart growth zoning in excess of what would previously have been allowed as-of-right through the underlying zoning. Second, the municipality receives a bonus payment upon the issuance of a building permit for each such additional unit.

Within the boundaries of an overlay district, a developer may elect either to develop a project in accordance with the requirements of the applicable smart growth zoning adopted under M.G.L. C.40R and 760 CMR 59.00, or to develop a project in accordance with requirements of the applicable underlying zoning adopted under M.G.L. C.40A. Nothing in M.G.L. C.40R and 760 CMR 59.00 shall affect a municipality's authority under M.G.L. C.40A to amend any provision of its local zoning ordinance or by-law, including the underlying zoning applicable within any area that lies within the boundaries of the smart growth zoning district.

Chapter 40S Contact

For additional information regarding Chapter 40S, contact Rick Kingsley at the Department of Revenue,
(617) 626-2376.

The District Improvement Financing (DIF) Program

Overview

The District Improvement Financing Program (DIF) is a public financing alternative available to all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. It enables municipalities to fund public works, infrastructure, and development projects by allocating future, incremental tax revenues collected from a predefined district to pay project costs.

How It Works

DIF is locally driven and approved by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC). The municipality must define the district and document a development program describing, among other things, how the DIF will encourage increased residential, commercial and industrial activity within the district. It must also detail the project improvements, financing plans, and community benefits. After the local public hearings and approvals, the municipality must submit an application to the EACC for final approval prior to implementing the program.

Advantages

The municipal investment is designed to stimulate private investment which, in turn, increases the taxable value of property and generates the incremental taxes.

- No new taxes are levied, and the DIF does not reduce or redirect current property tax revenues.
- Cities and towns are eligible to utilize this financing alternative without qualifying as open-blighted, decadent, substandard, or economically impaired.
- The DIF empowers municipalities to forward public purpose while assisting their private partners in accomplishing their goals.
- Financing terms are negotiable and can be tailored to suit the situation.

Eligibility

DIF is available to all cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that have projects meeting DIF regulations and guidelines.

Documentation

In order to obtain a copy of the District Improvement Financing Program Statute, please see [Chapter 40Q of the Massachusetts General Laws by linking through to section 18](#).

*If you require an official version of 402 CMR 3.00 (District Improvement Financing Program), it can be purchased from the Secretary of State, State Bookstore, State House, Room 116, Boston, MA 02133 for \$1.75. The Bookstore's telephone number is (617) 727-2834 and their e-mail address is bookstore@sec.state.ma.us.

For Technical Information contact:

Nayenday Thurman
Infrastructure Program Director
Massachusetts Office of Business Development
One Ashburton Place, Suite 2101
Boston, MA 02108
617-788-3610

The District Improvement Financing (DIF) Program

Overview

The District Improvement Financing Program (DIF) is a public financing alternative available to all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. It enables municipalities to fund public works, infrastructure, and development projects by allocating future, incremental tax revenues collected from a predefined district to pay project costs.

How It Works

DIF is locally driven and approved by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC). The municipality must define the district and document a development program describing, among other things, how the DIF will encourage increased residential, commercial and industrial activity within the district. It must also detail the project improvements, financing plans, and community benefits. After the local public hearings and approvals, the municipality must submit an application to the EACC for final approval prior to implementing the program.

Advantages

The municipal investment is designed to stimulate private investment which, in turn, increases the taxable value of property and generates the incremental taxes.

- No new taxes are levied, and the DIF does not reduce or redirect current property tax revenues.
- Cities and towns are eligible to utilize this financing alternative without qualifying as open-blighted, decadent, substandard, or economically impaired.
- The DIF empowers municipalities to forward public purpose while assisting their private partners in accomplishing their goals.
- Financing terms are negotiable and can be tailored to suit the situation.

Eligibility

DIF is available to all cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that have projects meeting DIF regulations and guidelines.

Documentation

In order to obtain a copy of the District Improvement Financing Program Statute, please see Chapter 40Q of the Massachusetts General Laws by linking through to section 18.

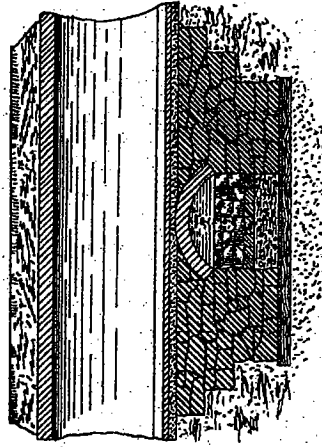
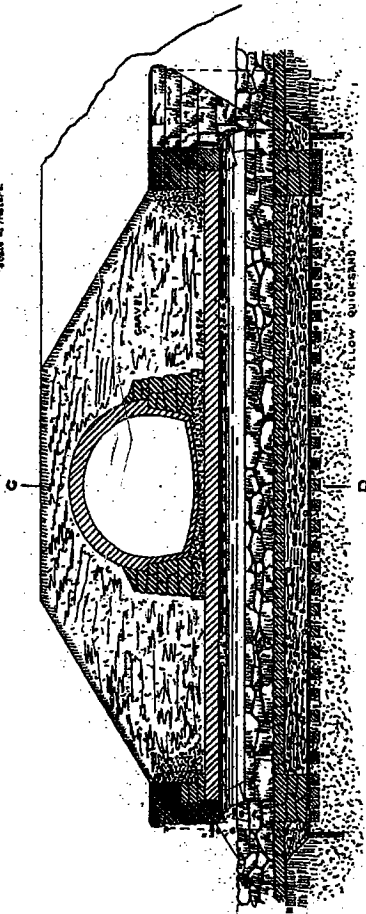
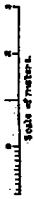
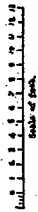
*If you require an official version of 402 CMR 3.00 (District Improvement Financing Program), it can be purchased from the Secretary of State, State Bookstore, State House, Room 116, Boston, MA 02133 for \$1.75. The Bookstore's telephone number is (617) 727-2834 and their e-mail address is bookstore@sec.state.ma.us.

For Technical Information contact:

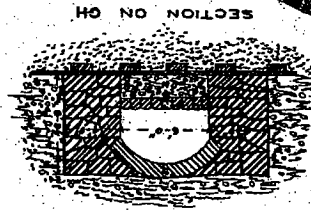
Nayenday Thurman
Infrastructure Program Director
Massachusetts Office of Business Development
One Ashburton Place, Suite 2101
Boston, MA 02108
617-788-3610

BOSTON WATER WORKS
 SUDBURY RIVER CONDUIT
CULVERT NO. 41.

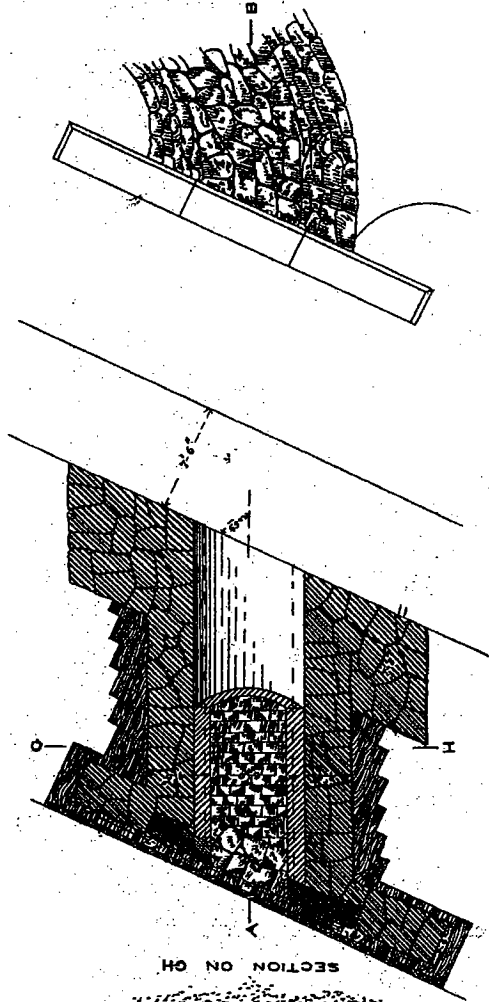
STATION 759+56
 AUG. 31, 1875



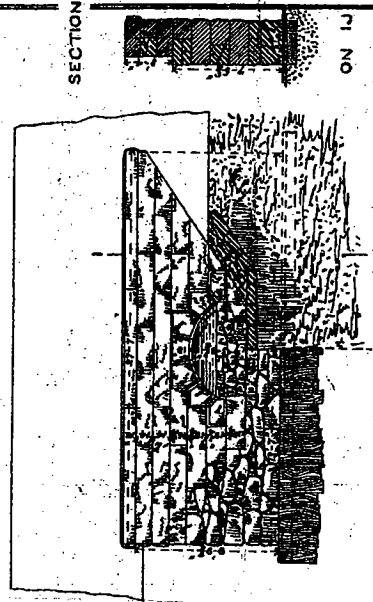
SECTION ON CD



SECTION ON GH

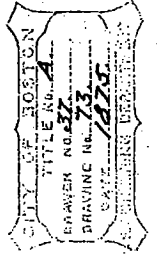
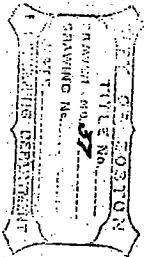


SECTION ON AB



END ELEVATION

PLAN



SUDBURY AQUEDUCT

Construction and Surface Features

Sheet 14

Station Classifications

- Functioning Manhole
- Gatehouse
- Metering Building
- Waste Weir
- Buried
- Station

Aqueduct Classifications

- At Grade or In Cut
- Bridge Section
- In Embankment
- Siphon Section
- Tunnel Section

Municipal Boundary

- Sudbury Aqueduct
- Municipal Boundary





AVONDALE RD

MONTVAL
MONTVALE CRES

CROFTDALE
BISHOPSGATE RD
THE LEDGE

BEACON HEIGHTS DR

RENEE TER
LEESONTN

ELGIN ST
WESTMINSTER RD

GRANT AVE
WESTBOURNE RD

BEACON RD
DEWINTER

GRAX CLIFF RD
EVERETT ST

772+78
770+00

GLANVILLE
WARREN ST

GLEN RD
KNOX ST

GARNER ST
IRVING ST
WESSEX RD

CHESTNUTTER
MARSHALL ST

GIBBS ST
DALTON RD

760+00
CHESLEY RD

WALTON ST
GLAZER RD

WASLEY PARK
WALTON ST

ALDEN ST
COMMONWEALTH AVE
RICE ST

TRINITY TER

WILLOW ST
EVERETT ST

755+00
SUMNER ST

WALTON ST
BALE AVE

CLASE ST
WASLEY ST

NATHAN RD
GALTON ST
RANSOM RD

FURBER LN

BOWEN ST
WILLOW TER

750+00
LYMAN ST

BEACON PL
DINO ST

BEACON PL
HEBRICK RD

WATER ST
MASON RD
CEDAR ST

FURBER LN

BOWEN ST
WILLOW TER

740+00
TYLER TER

BEACON PL
RIPLEY TER

BEACON PL
PULL ST

MORTON ST
ORIENT AVE
KENWOOD AVE

ASHTON AVE
HOMER ST

STAFFORD RD
CHAMBERLAIN ST
PLEASANT ST

738+15
WEBSTER CT

CRESCENT AVE
NORWOOD AVE

CRESCENT AVE
TROWBROOK ST
CENTRE ST

MANEMET RD
BURR RD

STAFFORD RD
CHAMBERLAIN ST

STAFFORD RD
CHAMBERLAIN ST
PLEASANT ST

730+00
BRACEBRIDGE RD

LAUREL ST
CRYSTAL ST

LAUREL ST
CRYSTAL ST

GREENLAWN AVE
CHARLOTTE RD

STAFFORD RD
CHAMBERLAIN ST

STAFFORD RD
CHAMBERLAIN ST
PLEASANT ST

723+00
HAWCOCK AVE

NEWBURY ST
ALBION ST

NEWBURY ST
ALBION ST

BOTHFIELD RD

STAFFORD RD
CHAMBERLAIN ST

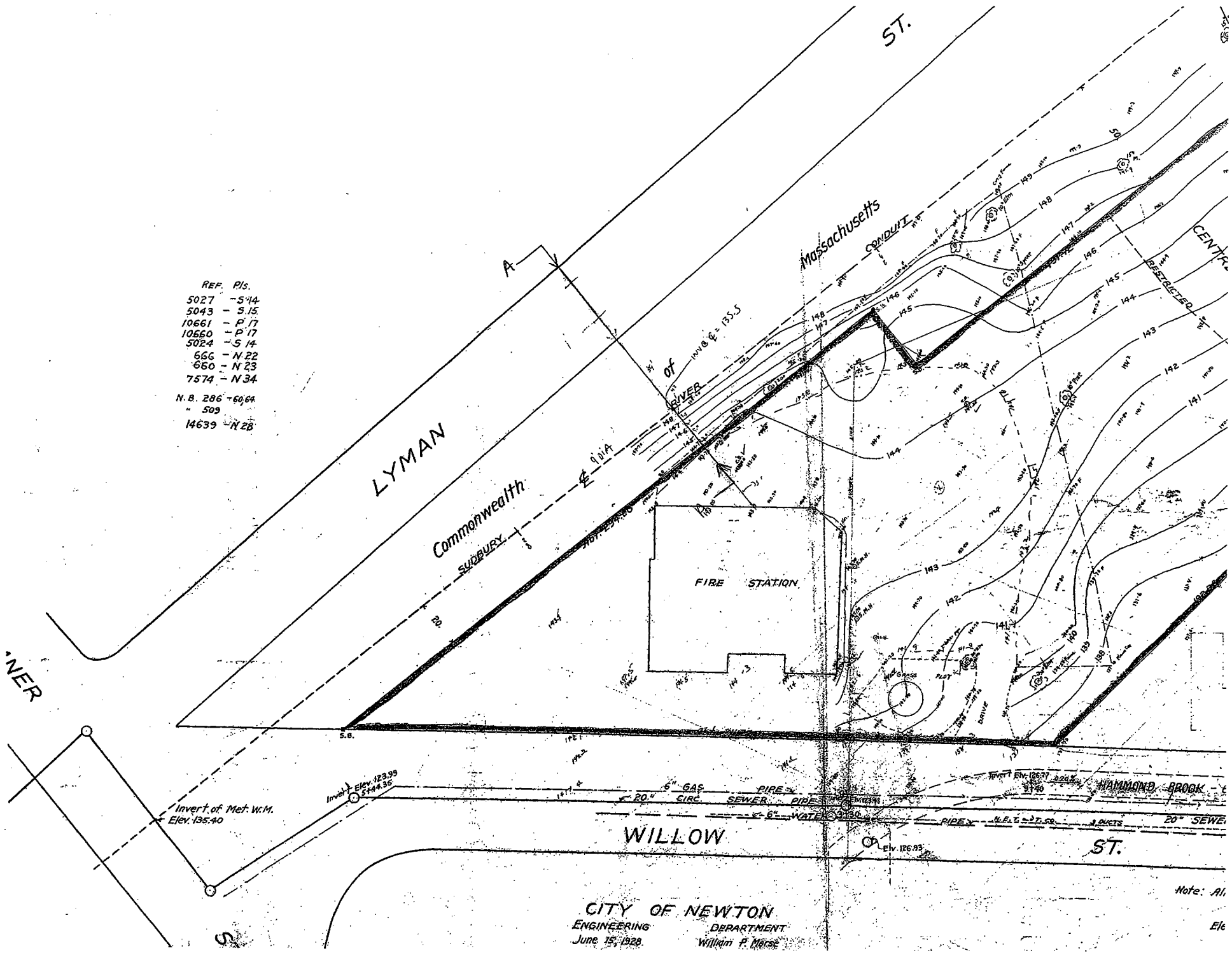
STAFFORD RD
CHAMBERLAIN ST
PLEASANT ST

720+00
BRENTWOOD AVE

LAUREL ST
CRYSTAL ST

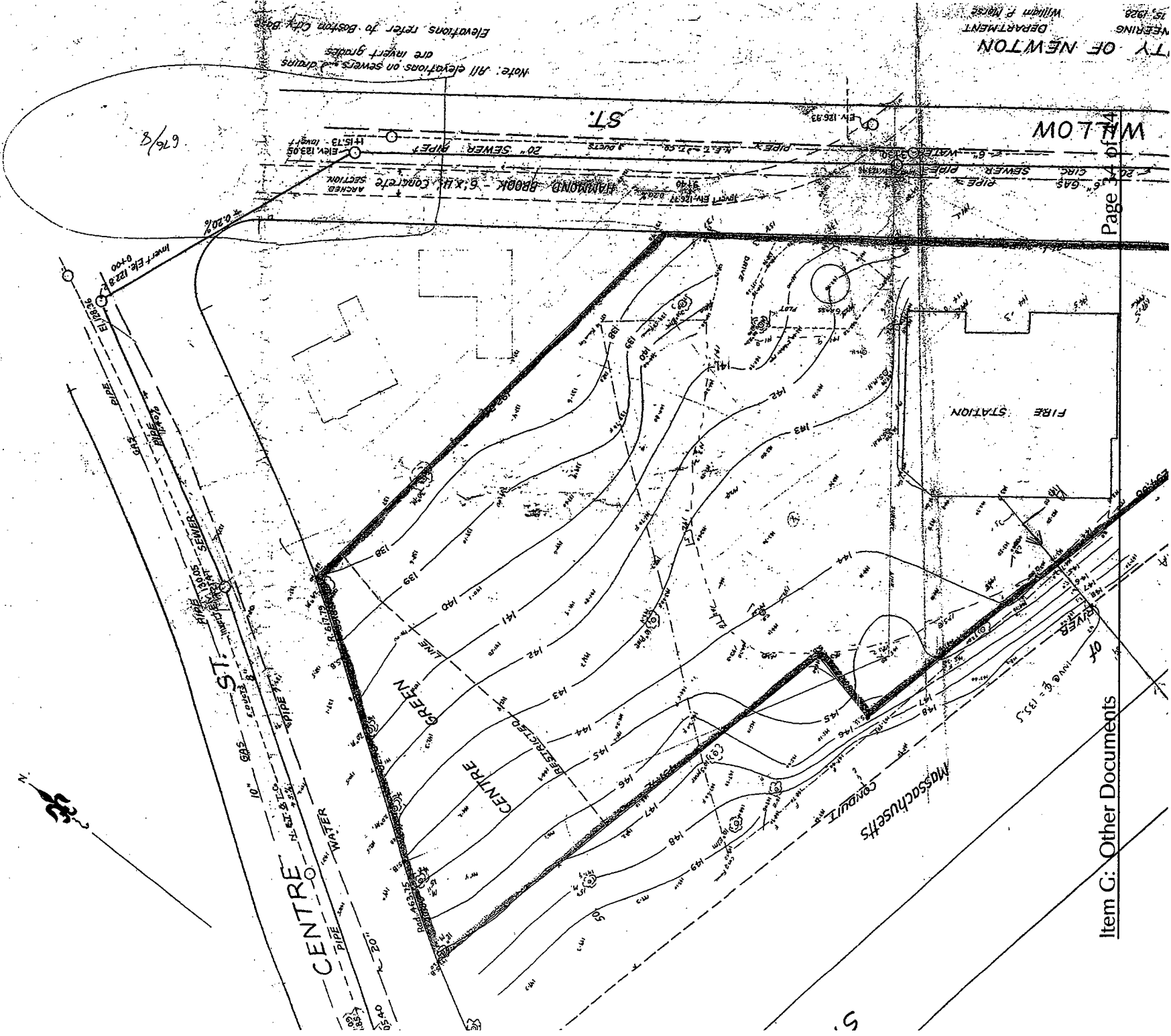
LAUREL ST
CRYSTAL ST

REF.	PIS.
5027	- S 14
5043	- S 15
10661	- P 17
10660	- P 17
5024	- S 14
666	- N 22
660	- N 23
7574	- N 34
N. B. 286	- 60.64
	- 509
14639	- N 28



CITY OF NEWTON
 ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
 June 15, 1928
 William P. Morse

Note: All elevations on sewers and drains are invert grades. Elevations refer to Boston City Datum.



Newton Centre Development Proposal

All Newton Music School statement

The All Newton Music School, founded in 1911, is one of the leading community music schools in New England and a major contributor to the cultural life of the city of Newton. The School has about 1400 students of all ages (1100 children represent all 21 public schools in Newton), a faculty of 70, and a staff of 6. Newton resident Paulette Bowes has served the School as Executive Director for 21 years. The ANMS Board of Trustees and Corporation include many Newton residents from a wide range of backgrounds.

When the School moved into its Chestnut Street facility in 1965, it had about 300 students and a small faculty. The School has outgrown Chestnut Street and must move in order to continue to serve Newton and surrounding communities with superior teaching, programming and performance spaces.

The Newton Centre site could be ideal for the School. It is the geographical center of Newton. More specifically, it is the upper portion of the triangle bounded by Beacon Street, Centre Street, and Langley Road, that is presently used for parking. The triangle is close to the MBTA Newton Centre station and the Centre Street bus line. There are many shops and restaurants available to parents while waiting for kids to finish their lessons. The area is lively and safe. The site could also serve the administrative space needs of other Newton cultural organizations such as the New Philharmonia Orchestra, the Newton Symphony Orchestra, and the Suzuki School.

The All Newton Music School is evaluating sites that will include the following features:

- 25-28,000 square feet to include soundproofed studios, a multi-purpose performance space, a state-of-the-art computer keyboard and composition laboratory, and a modern recording studio, with LEED design principles. The basement of a building could be used for rock and roll practice and the percussion department.
- Accommodation of ANMS special needs programs
- Convenient parking for 70 cars
- Safe traffic flow and building access, particularly for young students

Please contact Paulette Bowes, Executive Director, or Robert Keller, President for additional information, at 617-527-4553.

Growth in Massachusetts, Moving Forward

BY R. LISLE BAKER

“Smart growth” is the current buzz in planning and policy. Of course, who would be in favor of stupid growth? The challenge is to move beyond a catch phrase to effective action. While Massachusetts has taken positive strides, much remains to be done.

The key to success is to involve the citizens and officials closest to the problem—local governments and the constituents they serve—in the solutions. Otherwise, instead of collaboration in search of true commonwealth, we will have unfunded mandates, blame-throwing and little progress.

The following are some ideas to consider as we move forward in making “smart growth” even smarter.

1. Make sure that “smart growth” recognizes situational distinctions, including neighborhood, community, and regional character and important environmental concerns.

Local land use controls add value to housing investments. Anyone could buy land and build a house on it, but if the land next door can become a polluting factory or a dump, that investment would be risky. Before zoning laws existed, landowners would sue incompatible

neighbors under the law of nuisance for interfering with the use and enjoyment of their land. But that is a little like directing traffic by litigation, rather than using painted lanes or traffic lights. Indeed, local zoning laws came about to separate uses that were desirable in themselves, but not necessarily good neighbors. As the U.S. Supreme Court opined in a seminal case upholding an early ordinance, “a nuisance may be merely a right thing in the wrong place, like a pig in a parlor instead of the barnyard.”

Local zoning laws have been part of the fabric of every community in the state for years, so much so that they are taken for granted. If you live in a residential neighborhood where houses are no more than three stories high, for example, you

R. Lisle Baker, a Newton alderman and professor at Suffolk University Law School, is a member of the MMA's Policy Committee on Municipal and Regional Administration and the Drafting Committee of the Zoning Reform Working Group.

can expect the new house next door to be the same, because local zoning imposes use and dimensional controls common to a zoning district. This effect is called the mutual "reciprocity of advantage," where one landowner's rights are limited to some degree in return for similar limitations on the land of a neighbor.

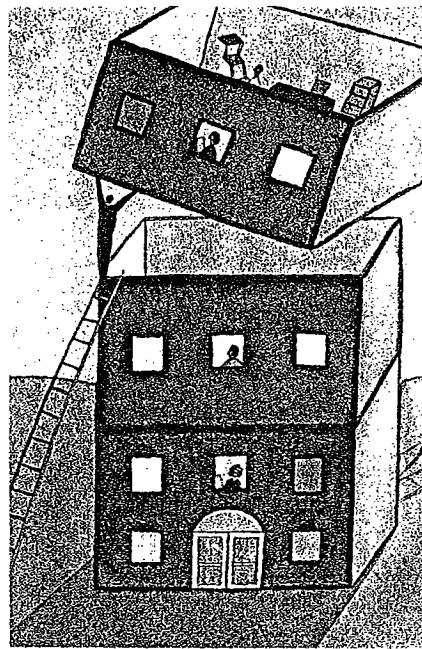
In short, citizens live together successfully in part because the residential character of their neighborhoods are preserved by municipal zoning ordinances and bylaws, which help to foster a sense of investment in and contribution to the larger community. In an effort to "grow smart," therefore, it's important that state land use planners recognize the positive incentives that local zoning can provide.

It would be a mistake to assume that "smart growth" is the tube sock of state public policies: one size fits all.

The current draft of the city of Newton's Comprehensive Plan, now undergoing revision, recognizes the value of smart growth "with a few additional considerations that stem from this being a fully developed community having a valued structure of neighborhood character and cohesion."

'Growing Smart'...in Newton must give important consideration to neighborhood as well as Citywide impacts. Consistent with that, we seek to protect the rich choice among the City's neighborhoods, some highly diverse and others not, some quite compact, others more open. We seek to assure development densities well related to both neighborhood character and infrastructure capacity. We seek to promote a range of housing opportunities.

In setting "smart growth" priorities, it is also important to keep environmental



and regional factors in mind. For example, as global warming appears likely to raise sea levels and storm intensity, coastal locations will become increasingly hazardous, so it would be unwise to focus new development there even if there is existing infrastructure, such as public transportation. And with much of Massachusetts still relatively rural, it is important not to ignore the needs and the character of these communities. In fact, it may be smart not to grow in an area where important natural or other resources need protection.

In short, local officials know that land use is a matter that requires local knowledge. It would be a mistake to assume that "smart growth" is the tube sock of state public policies: one size fits all.

2. Make sure that "smart growth" is not simply a way of displacing older homes, which can provide entry-level housing, with new construction, but also help with appropriately sized infill projects.

Much of the housing stock in Massachusetts is old. Indeed, one of the innovations in Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket has been the reuse of existing housing on public land, echoing an older practice whereby old houses weren't torn down but simply moved to a new location. Just as used cars are more affordable than new ones, the same is true of much of our existing housing stock, and we should not

allow it to "leak out" of the bottom of the housing bucket while we try to fill up the top with large new housing.

In Newton, for example, the city has adopted a demolition delay ordinance and a limit on house size to check some of the worst abuses where an older, smaller house is torn down to make room for a "McMansion." Some communities are nervous about enacting such limitations, however, and the proposed Community Planning Act, described below, has a provision to amend current state zoning law by removing the restriction against regulating the maximum interior area of a single-family residential building.

Some local officials consider small, scattered-site, affordable housing development, especially as infill, to be exceedingly "smart" growth. In the process of assuring development, it is important for the state to facilitate small projects as well as big ones, since lots of little successes can add up over time.

It is also worth looking at cities where older structures, such as mills, have not yet been renovated into housing because of the economics involved. Rhode Island, for example, has used a much more extensive historic tax credit than Massachusetts to induce the kind of infill-adaptive reuse of older structures that can help revitalize existing downtowns.

3. Remove disincentives and enhance incentives toward "smart growth" in state laws.

The Home Rule Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution provides that:

"It is the intention of this article to ... grant and confirm to the people of every city and town the right of self-government in local matters ... subject to such standards and requirements as the General Court may establish by law. ..."

Part of the difficulty for local laws is that what the Massachusetts Constitution has granted to municipalities, the General Court has often taken away by enacting restrictive rules applicable to local planning and zoning. (Imagine how we would feel if state government had to get an act of Congress every time it wanted to do something positive for its citizens in the area of land use controls.)

In Massachusetts, the primary responsibility for local land use control falls to

the 351 cities and towns (except for Boston, which operates on its own special laws), but their powers as to zoning and subdivision control are circumscribed by state law. (This point was well-made by the 2004 book *Dispelling the Myth of Home Rule*, by David J. Barron, Gerald E. Frug and Rick T. Su.)

Here's one example: under current state zoning law, a landowner can avoid the impact of a zoning change simply by filing a duly noticed preliminary subdivision plan, followed within seven months by an approved final plan, which will "freeze" the zoning in effect at the time of the first submission. In the late 1980s, the city of Taunton, with Route 495 coming near, attempted to adopt a "smart growth" local planning initiative that would have directed growth into and around existing city and village centers and to areas served by city water and sewer. When the plan became public, the city experienced a rush of subdivision plans, assuring that the city would continue to grow in accordance with the sprawl patterns dictated by the old zoning rather than the new plan.

Massachusetts is also unique in allowing the filing of "approval not required" plans or divisions of lots on existing public ways, some of which may be unpaved, single-lane roads. These contribute to housing dispersion and expensive public services that burden rural towns, all without requiring any of the review that a conventional subdivision would need.

For more than six years, a volunteer

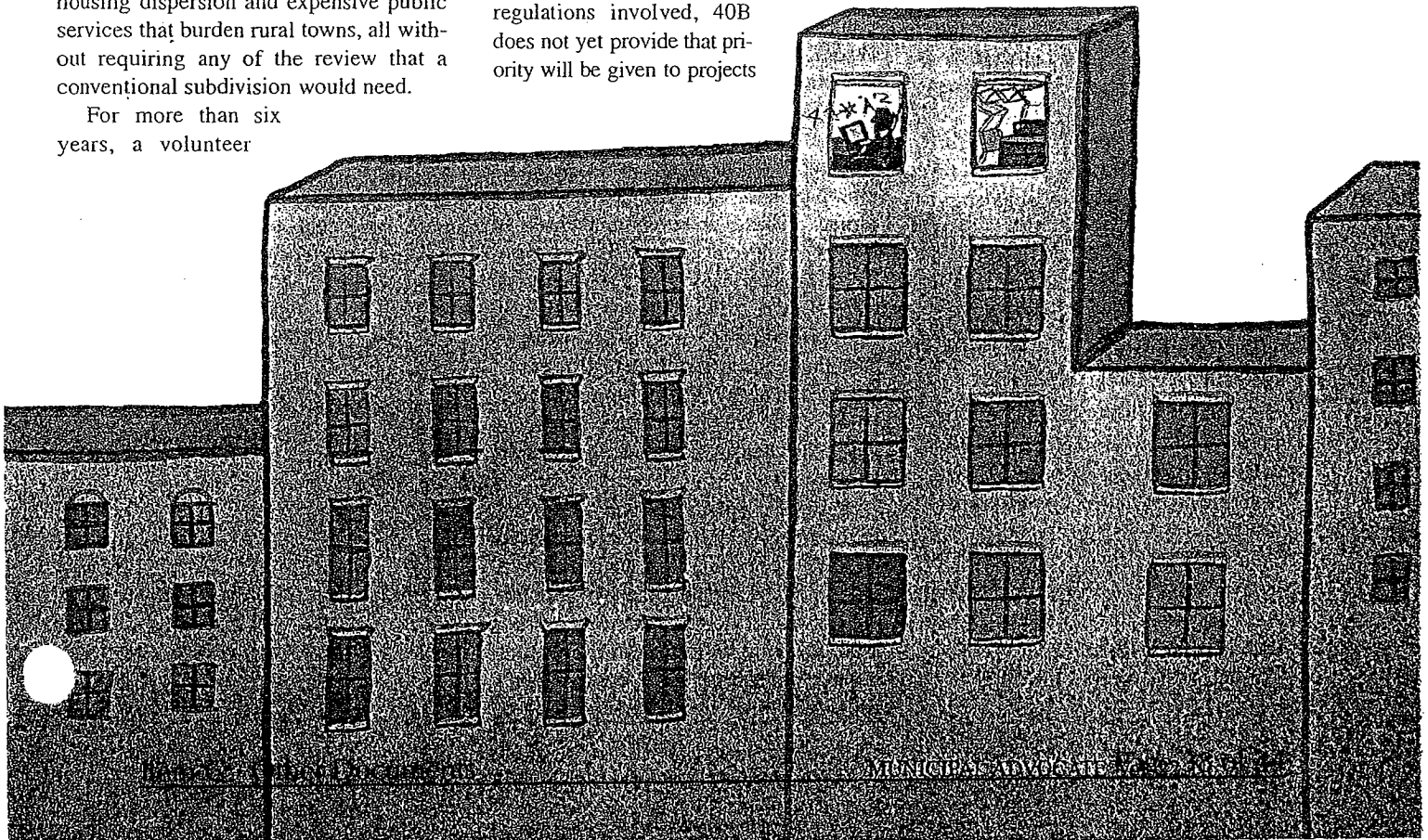
Zoning Reform Working Group composed of representatives of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, local and state officials, the state's major planning and environmental organizations, citizens, and legislators and others have been working on updating the state's outmoded zoning and planning laws, culminating in the proposed Community Planning Act (formerly the Massachusetts Land Use Reform Act). The MMA Board of Directors voted in June 2004 to support the bill in principle as originally filed—it has gone through two major revisions since then—with the understanding that the MMA would continue to support any amendments to the bill that enhanced local control. (For a description of the current version of the Community Planning Act, see the Massachusetts Zoning Reform link at www.massmunilaw.org.)

Also, virtually every Massachusetts community has been exposed to Chapter 40B of the general laws, which allows a developer who is willing to commit a quarter of the units to affordable housing, an important and valuable public policy, to bypass much of local land use control by getting a comprehensive permit. While efforts have been made recently to make Chapter 40B projects more responsive to local concerns by updating the regulations involved, 40B does not yet provide that priority will be given to projects

High-quality new development can go forward successfully so long as it is well done in a way that tries to fit in.

located on "smart growth" sites rather than at the discretion of the developer. (The state, however, has begun to earmark some housing subsidy funds for "transit-oriented development," including 40B projects, and local Community Preservation Act funds may also be available.)

A law that did attempt to focus on such sites is the recently enacted Chapter 40R, supplemented by Chapter 40S. The idea was to encourage municipalities to rezone property to allow dense development in "smart growth" locations by providing state funds for new housing constructed, including some funding for the cost of educating the schoolchildren who might live there. Unfortunately, the law was enacted without a public hearing



or significant input from local officials who actually vote on zoning changes. So, for example, the law requires a party aggrieved by approval of a project to post a bond equal to twice the estimated landowner's carrying costs and attorney's fees while the appeal is pending. Since 40R is a local option law, will many local officials or town meetings adopt a law with a section that so burdens affected citizens? Provisions like these, which the MMA had opposed, can constitute poison pills that can keep such laws from being locally accepted. Finally, while welcome, the financial aid provided does not go to mitigate the impact on the properties neighboring the proposed denser zoning, but to the community as a whole, again making it seem unfair if part of the community gets the revenue benefit while another part gets the density burden.

It's also easy to recommend altering state law to make some land uses available as of right by over-riding home rule, such as recent proposals to allow mixed residential use in all commercial zones near transit stops, or cluster zoning (wherever located), or even accessory apartments in any single-family home. While these uses can often be worthwhile, it is misguided to attempt to do land-use planning for them by statewide legislative mandate rather than providing communities with positive incentives that fit local needs and concerns.

If there is a lesson to be learned from local zoning experience in the context of state law, it is that high-quality new development can go forward successfully so long as it is well done in a way that tries to fit in, rather than overburden, the affected community.

4. Use the experience of local government with discretionary permits and dispute resolution to help "smart growth" development fit in.

Even public-spirited citizen volunteers can't do it all, and with rare exception, most land use decisions are made by citizen volunteers or modestly compensated part-time public officials. They need legal and planning assistance, even with the best of laws to administer. But these planning and legal service expenses are often low priorities in municipal budgets, where public safety and schools justifiably have first claim.

The Community Preservation Act allowed communities to tax themselves modestly to fund open space, historic preservation and community housing—public expenditures that stood in the back of the line of municipal funding priorities. While some project-specific technical assistance can be obtained from developers under state law (M.G.L. Ch. 44, Sec. 53G), state grants to a municipality for "smart growth" technical assistance are limited to \$30,000, so more funds dedicated to support local planning and zoning are needed too. While state and regional interests need attention, only local government has the site-specific knowledge and the time of citizen volunteers to make land-use planning work. Imagine having a state agency try to plan and zone 351 cities and towns and then administer it day-to-day?

Positive examples in land use should be rewarded, celebrated and publicized...

The formal and informal dispute resolution experience also provides some lessons. The proposed Community Planning Act already provides for mediation not only after a dispute arises and a case goes to court, but even before a project gets proposed, so as to minimize the burden to everyone involved. Even without such a formal process, however, municipalities work with developers and citizens every day on projects that require a zoning permit to go forward. It is through the public hearings, working sessions, and ultimate conditions that projects with higher density are done in a way that minimizes adverse impacts on neighbors while producing the public benefit that new construction can provide.

Positive examples in land use should be rewarded, celebrated and publicized so that other communities can learn about innovations made possible by the mini-federalism that local government provides. More technical assistance in the form of sample ordinances or planning reports could help other communities seeking to

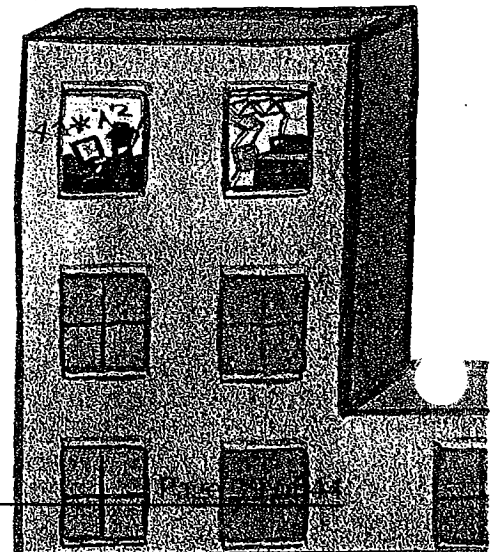
achieve smarter growth.

Even without the proposed Community Planning Act, there are many local success stories. Here are a few:

- In Franklin, a developer has plans to replace a warehouse with three buildings that include offices, condominiums and commercial space, located within walking distance of a commuter rail train station.
- Newton provides density bonuses by special permit to developers who are willing to commit a portion of their project to affordable housing. Newton also acquired a golf course some years ago by a combination of development on the edge and financing part of the acquisition cost with a special betterment assessment on surrounding properties, including the new development, because they benefited by the preservation of recreational open space next door.
- Framingham has approved almost 500 housing units through mixed commercial and residential, or high-density projects, including the Arcade at Downtown Framingham.
- Natick recently approved a "housing overlay option plan" to allow for redevelopment of industrial sites into housing construction.

[For more examples, see related story, Smart Growth Is Gaining Ground, page 16.]

Land use planning and zoning is likely to remain local for the foreseeable future, but municipalities need the cooperation of the state to help them grow smarter. At the same time, the state needs the cooperation of municipalities because they are on the front lines of decision-making and know local conditions. Working together, both state and local government can achieve smarter growth and build the future commonwealth we want. ❁





updated 4:24 a.m. EST, Tue December 4, 2007

SHARE EMAIL SAVE PRINT

Metropolitan areas ranked for walkability

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Author: Young professionals drive national trend toward walkable communities
- Report ranks major U.S. metro areas in number of "walkable places" per capita
- Christopher Leinberger: U.S. had "amnesia about how to build great places"
- Author's caveat: Brookings survey doesn't factor in size of each walkable place

Next Article in U.S. »

ARLINGTON, Virginia (AP) — Caitlin Jones and her fiance, Evan Oxfeld, grew up in suburbs where getting anywhere worth going required a car. When the couple started looking for their first home together, they wanted something different: walkability.



Kristine Bruce walks her son David, 2, through the Arlington, Virginia, neighborhood of Clarendon.

"For me at least, that was the thing I missed most about college — just being able to walk everywhere," Oxfeld said as he and Jones strolled through Arlington's Ballston neighborhood, where they are moving into a condo.

Young professionals like Jones and Oxfeld, both 24, are driving a national trend toward more walkable communities, says the author of a report to be released Tuesday by the Brookings Institution.

The report ranks the Washington region first among the country's major metropolitan areas in the number of "walkable places" per capita, thanks to changes in just the past 15 years.

Christopher B. Leinberger, a real estate developer and visiting fellow at Brookings, set out to quantify

the walkability trend by counting the number of "regional-serving walkable urban places" in each of the 30 biggest metropolitan areas in the country.

"Regional-serving" means the place is not just a bedroom community, but has jobs, retail or cultural institutions that bring in people who don't live there.

Leinberger, who also teaches urban planning at the University of Michigan, counted 157 such "walkable places" — including Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts; Coconut Grove in Miami, Florida; and the Houston, Texas, area's Sugar Land Town Square, one of many built-from-scratch "lifestyle centers" to make the list.

The Tampa, Florida, area was the only one without a single place on his list.

Leinberger counted only places where significant subsidies are no longer required to spur development. He predicted that many more — such as downtown Detroit, Michigan, and Crossroads in Kansas City, Missouri — would reach that point within the next decade.

WALKABILITY RANKINGS

1. Washington
2. Boston, Massachusetts
3. San Francisco, California
4. Denver, Colorado
5. Portland, Oregon
6. Seattle, Washington
7. Chicago, Illinois
8. Miami, Florida
9. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
10. New York
11. San Diego, California
12. Los Angeles, California
13. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
14. Atlanta, Georgia
15. Baltimore, Maryland
16. St. Louis, Missouri
17. Minneapolis, Minnesota
18. Detroit, Michigan
19. Columbus, Ohio
20. Las Vegas, Nevada
21. Houston, Texas

Walkable cities have been around for centuries, but Leinberger argues that after the rise of the automobile, planners and real estate developers hit on the lucrative suburban strip-mall formula and stuck to it.

"For 50 years we had this collective amnesia about how to build great places," said Leinberger, whose institution describes itself as a nonprofit public-policy organization.

The New York area had the highest number of walkable urban places in Leinberger's survey. Most of the 21 places he listed are neighborhoods in Manhattan.

But the Washington region, with 20 walkable places, outranked New York on a per-capita basis, and Leinberger says it could serve as a national model. It has one walkable place for every 264,000 people.

"Today there are 20 that are at or near critical mass, downtown just being one of them," Leinberger said. "Twenty years ago there were two."

The new additions include District of Columbia neighborhoods such as the West End area near George Washington University, and the revitalized Capitol Hill.

Across the Potomac River in Virginia, Arlington County has seven places on the list, including Ballston.

AccuQuote

If you died today, who would fund your family's future?

Protect Your Family With Life Insurance

10-Yr Level Term Life Insurance
\$500,000 Policy (monthly premiums)

age	male
35	\$16.19
40	\$21.88
45	\$34.56
50	\$56.00

Click Here

AccuQuote

Most Popular

STORIES

Most Viewed Most Emailed Top Searches

- 1 Taylor suspects on suicide watch
- 2 Dave Chappelle's comedy marathon
- 3 Suicide blamed on mother's cult
- 4 Wrong woman named pageant winner
- 5

- 23. Kansas City, Missouri
- 24. Orlando, Florida
- 25. Dallas, Texas
- 26. Phoenix, Arizona
- 27. Sacramento, California
- 28. Cincinnati, Ohio
- 29. Cleveland, Ohio
- 30. Tampa, Florida

Source: Brookings Institution

Leinberger attaches one major caveat to his report: The survey did not take into account the size of each walkable place.

For example, midtown Manhattan is given the same weight as Reston Town Center, a lifestyle center outside Washington, even though the latter has only a tiny fraction of the office and retail space, residential units, and hotel rooms of midtown.

Leinberger attributes Washington's success with walkability to several factors, including a large population of 20- and 30-somethings and recent strong economic growth.

But the chief factor, he said, is the success of the Metro. The 31-year-old rail system has transformed the region, shaping development and making the walkable urban model more viable.

Leinberger calls rail transit a key factor in the success of walkable places. Roughly two-thirds of the 157 places he counted are served by rail, he said.

Good planning also helped in the Washington region, particularly in Arlington, Leinberger said.

When the Metro was being built, county officials lobbied to put their portion underground along a central commercial road, rather than above ground and along the interstate. The county then loosened zoning regulations around each Metro stop, a policy that gave rise to "urban villages" such as Ballston.

Oxford, a software engineer, and Jones, an academic counselor at Georgetown University, said proximity to the Metro was a key factor in their decision to live in Ballston. They also like being able to walk to restaurants and shops and the main branch of the Arlington Public Library.

Walking among Ballston's tall buildings recently, Leinberger praised the mix of commercial and residential spaces, the picturesque courtyards, and the use of underground parking instead of surface lots.

The one big mistake is Ballston Commons Mall, a suburban-style mall that has failed to attract many national retailers, Leinberger said.

Even Ballston's boosters agree with that assessment.

"It seemed to be the right answer at the time. It does not work today," said Julie Mangis, executive director of the Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership. The group wants to encourage more retail across the entire neighborhood, she said, which compared with some other sections of Arlington is weighted heavily toward offices.

Leinberger predicted retail options would improve as the area's population continues to grow.

And if Ballston's sparkling new buildings seem a little too sparkling and new, well, that is bound to change, too, he said.

"This has some character, and it's only going to get better with time," Leinberger said. "Rome wasn't built in a day, and it certainly didn't get the patina of Rome in much less than a couple of centuries." E-mail to a friend

Copyright 2007 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Ads by Google
Foreclosure Listings
 Free search of 3, 4, 5 bdrm homes No money down, starting at \$10,000
www.foreclosurestore.com
DC Bathroom Remodeling
 Get Bath Remodeling. We Specialize in Remodels for Disabilities!
www.GbkRemodeling.com
Web & Interactive Design
 Learn About The Art Institutes' Web Design & Interactive Media Program.
www.ArtInstitutes.edu

- 5 Winter weather wreaks havoc
- 6 'Rudolph' puppets making rounds
- 7 People do anything but drive
- 8 Bush: Iran still dangerous
- 9 Is there a smart way to drink?
- 10 Commentary: Fear of losing culture...

more most popular »

VIDEOS

TOPICS

careerbuilder.com

Quick Job Search

keyword(s):

- Part Time Jobs
- Sales & Marketing Jobs
- Customer Service Jobs

enter city:

State Job type

SEARCH more options »

We Recommend

Stories you may be interested in based on past browsing

Three suspects in NFL killing on suicide watch

Young man's suicide blamed on mother's cult

Long road to credit recovery

How TV's 'Rudolph' was saved

Storms leave downed trees, mudslides behind

SHARE EMAIL SAVE PRINT

► From the Blogs: Controversy, commentary, and debate

Top News



Bush: Nuke-less Iran still 'dangerous'

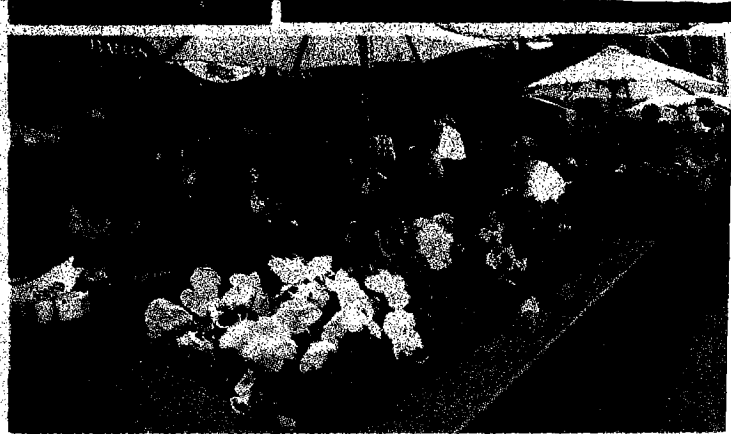
No image

Medical helicopter missing in Alaska

A question of character

In Franklin, Westborough, Lincoln, and other western suburbs, developers and local officials want to spend millions to revive their town centers. The goal is to create character — in a modern New England village. And it's not just about adding condos and shopping. The ingredients include outdoor dining, public art, mass transit, wrought-iron lampposts, and bike racks.





By Megan Woolhouse

GLOBE STAFF

Lincoln's town center is hardly a hotbed of activity. A speed bump greets visitors driving in on the main drag.

Yet last week, a developer broke ground on a \$7 million project to renovate a local shopping center and erect a 2½ story building in this no-stoplight downtown. There are even plans for a restaurant, with the town's first-ever liquor license.

"Everyone's a little nervous," said Cathy Jahrling, one of the few customers grocery shopping at Donelan's Market in the town center on a recent morning. "Change doesn't come easily to Lincoln."

The same could be said of many New England cities and towns, yet change is on the way. In Franklin, Westborough, Marlborough, and other communities, private devel-

opers are building multimillion-dollar projects aimed at recreating downtown centers, often in their own image. The goal of some of the projects is to mimic the look and feel of a New England village, creating space for merchants, new apartments, and even new public commons.

The investment is anything but common. In Franklin, there is \$28 million in construction. A Westborough developer won't disclose the cost of its 23-acre downtown redevelopment project, except to say it is in the tens of millions.

The changes don't come without public debate. Downtowns are often the psychological epicenter of their communities. In Newton, a city task force has been at odds for months over how to redevelop that city's center.

But Robert D. Yaro, a planning professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a former faculty member at Harvard and the Uni-

versity of Massachusetts, said the transformation is a sweeping one in "reaction to the monoculture of the suburbs."

Villages need more than 3-bedroom, 3-bath megamansions and conservation land, he said.

"Many towns have done a great job preserving their physical character, but not their characters," Yaro said, referring to the loss of affordable downtown housing and the population that once lived in urban centers. "They've gotten to be less interesting places, so now they're transforming dramatically."

In Lincoln, town officials are working with a local nonprofit developer to build a grocery store and expand the post office. In Franklin, a private developer will build offices, condos, and what local officials envision as a downtown sculpture park. In Westborough, a private developer is building luxury condos and retail with parking on the site of a former in-

TOWN CENTERS, Page 8

Projects underway in several towns

► TOWN CENTERS Continued from Page 1

dustrial abrasives factory. In Marlborough, a private developer will turn an old printing factory on the outskirts of downtown into dozens of luxury apartments.

Dennis Frenchman, chairman of urban planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said it's hard to predict whether such projects can bring back downtown centers.

"Can a single project that's rather large in scale, relatively peaking, add to the quality of life and sense of place? Or does it have to be built from the bottom up?" he asked. "That's a classic urban design question."

In Franklin, workers are building 27 condominiums in the city's dead downtown, with plans for 30 more in the works. Known as Franklin Center Commons, its developers are unlikely to include the mill workers and straw hat makers that put this manufacturing town on the map.

Developer John Marini hopes many will be students from near-Dean College.

Marini is leading a \$28 million construction effort in the downtown, tearing down three buildings and replacing them with a mix of retail, office space, and housing. Students will use downtown MBTA station and hang out in local cafés.

"It's going to bring kids in the time," Marini said. "They'll be king. They won't have cars." Urban planners call that

"mixed-use" development, and at its most simplified, it is shops and retail centers that also include housing. Residents give retailers and developers a built-in audience. Town officials like it because it brings in revenue that doesn't burden the school system. Young professionals and empty nesters like it because it gives them smaller, more affordable places to live in the suburbs.

Marini built a similar redevelopment in downtown Canton. Himself an empty-nester, he now lives there.

In Lincoln, town officials are working with the Rural Land Foundation to renovate a tired

shopping center in the heart of downtown. The plan will allow the post office to expand and create a new building to house a grocery store and other commercial businesses. For a while, town officials, residents, planners, and foundation members debated whether to allow apartments or housing at the site, but that idea never made it.

Selectwoman Sara A. Mattes said Lincoln wanted to keep its rural character and slow pace. An influx of single-family homes increased the population of the one-time farming town, but it is still small, with about 5,000 residents. Mattes said most of them

didn't want to see office buildings and national chain stores in the town center.

"It's not been part of the Lincoln culture," Mattes said. "We're still bemoaning the loss of our pharmacy."

Few in Westborough bemoan their own loss: the sprawling abrasives factory that sat in the heart of downtown for decades. The former brownfield will soon be a 23-acre retail and housing complex, home to dozens of chain stores, a Roche Brothers grocery store, and luxury condominiums.

Investor and general manager Lou Petra has high expectations for its success. Known as Bay State Commons, advertisements bill it as situated in a "New England village type setting." It will include 44 condominiums in a four-story complex, with unit prices between \$534,900 and \$739,900.

They overlook a two-acre park, or "Great Lawn."

"This is a very good addition" to the downtown, Petra said. "It should be a win-win-win for the town, the retailers, and the developers."

Petra said the success of the project does not hinge on the number of residents living downtown, but on how well the project draws shoppers from surrounding towns. Petra said investors have studied the area's demographics and think the project is a good fit. The median family income in Westborough is \$94,610.

Continued on next page



BILL POLO/GLOBE STAFF

Artist Marcia Billig displays a clay model of a bronze sculpture that will be on display in Franklin's downtown.

Suburbs looking to revive centers

Continued from preceding page
compared with \$50,046 nationally, according to the US Census.

The Westborough project will also bring national chains downtown. It includes more than 300,000 square feet of retail space, not including parking, which is the equivalent of a typical Home Depot store.

Town Planner Jim Robbins said a Linens N Things, Paper Store, and Ted's Montana Grill will come in. Panera Bread, GNC, and Payless Shoes are also expected.

Robbins said there were more than 40 public meetings on the project, and it took two years to issue all the necessary permits. People saw the development as such an improvement, there were "no retail uses people didn't want," he said.

He said the city's design review board ensured that the buildings would fit in with the existing 19th century architecture. Many of the buildings have flat rooftops, some will be brick, others clapboard, he said.

"We wanted to make it unique," he said. "We didn't want it to look like it was plopped down from outer space."

In Franklin, Town Manager Jeffrey D. Nutting said people wanted the town center to be a celebration of the town's character, if not a show of its newfound prosperity.

In recent years, Franklin was one of the fastest-growing communities in the state. People were drawn to its two MBTA stops, proximity to Interstate 495, and affordable housing. The average 3-bedroom house cost \$400,000 in 2006.

But at its heart, the community is a mill town that attracted factories because of its proximity to the Blackstone River.

In 2001, town leaders began looking at how to revitalize downtown, a one-way street that had

become a speedway. There were a few stalwart businesses operating there, as well as a bevy of pizza parlors and nail salons.

"We're not a seaport or a tourist destination," Nutting said. "The goal is just to make it warm and friendly."

Change has come slowly. There's now a shop showcasing the work of regional artists and a boutique called Pretty In Pink. Residents would like a restaurant and a Trader Joe's market, Nutting said. And plans are underway to install sculptures to make the town center unique. Officials used a \$50,000 state grant to pay for a statue of a boy waving a signature straw hat.

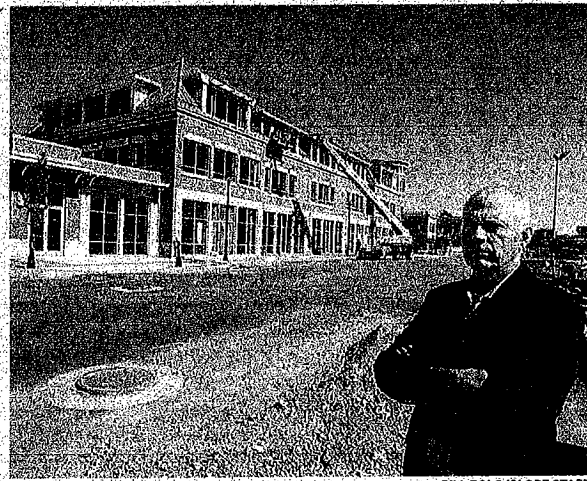
The town will also use a \$5 million federal grant to redesign its downtown streetscape, creating two-way traffic and installing brick crosswalks and old-fashioned-looking street lamps.

Tiny Lincoln plans to make a different statement. The Rural Land Foundation will renovate one shopping complex, "the mall," as it is known locally. The mall is a modernist building that sits amid the traditional Revolutionary war era homes and white steepled churches. Town officials said it reflects a unique era in the town, which has a collection of Bauhaus period homes from the 1950s tucked into its rolling hills.

Town Planner Mark Whitehead said the community vision, and the construction plans, took five years of discussion and debate. And the outcome was this: People wanted a place where they "could run into each other and talk."

"I don't think it will be that much of a change," Whitehead said. "The new building going in there isn't all that much bigger than some of the single-family homes here."

Megan Woolhouse can be reached at mwoolhouse@globe.com.



BILL POLO/GLOBE STAFF

Wellesley planning director Rick Brown, with the Linden Square project in the background.

In Wellesley, center's success spreading out

Several town planners mention Wellesley when they talk about the town center they'd like for their own community.

The story of how Wellesley got such a prosperous downtown starts with a coincidence.

A plan to widen Route 16 about 20 years ago coincided with a school redistricting project.

"Everything hit the fan" when parents learned that their children would be walking to school along a double-wide stretch of highway, town planner Rick Brown said. "The project ran into a buzz saw."

Town leaders changed consultants and architects. Sidewalks got widened. Workers installed decorative street lights, benches, and tables. They planted trees.

Local shop owners saw a surge in business. New businesses opened.

"It really was a complete shot in the arm for the business area," Brown said.

Today, Wellesley's downtown is a New England version of Rodeo Drive. There are five-star restaurants, one-of-a-kind bou-

tiques, scaled-down chain stores. And the commercial success is spilling over into nearby neighborhoods. A third of a mile from downtown, a lumber and coal yard has been converted to Linden Square, a complex that will include a spa, upscale stores, and a health club.

It helps that the town can draw on the considerable wealth of its residents. The median assessed value of a typical home is \$824,000. According to a news release from Linden Square's developer, Federal Realty Investment Trust of Maryland, the average income within a 3-mile radius of the project is \$191,000 a year.

Dennis Frenchman, chairman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology urban planning department, said that kind of affluence surely helps a downtown to prosper, but it doesn't seal the deal.

"There has to be a little serendipity, too," he said. "These things are under our control. If a city is vigilant about trying to focus activity in its town center, obviously that helps."

MEGAN WOOLHOUSE

On tap: sidewalk dining, drinking

ALCOHOL
continued from Page A1

Alcohol ban have begun submitting designs. Some already have city approval, but so far only one has an OK from the state, which has final say on each license.

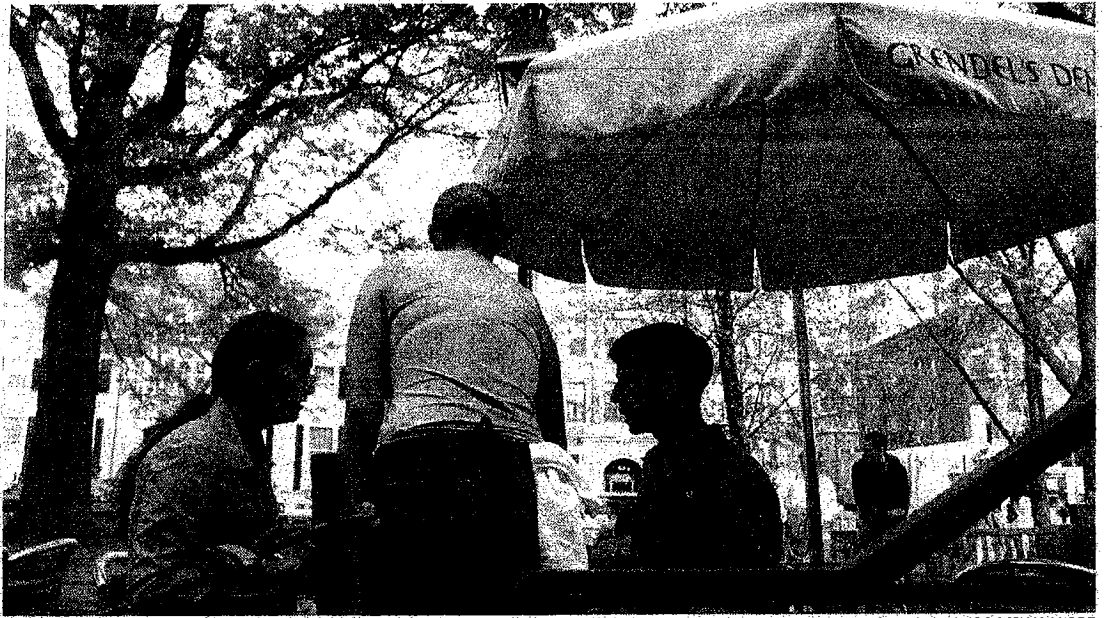
Boston may be called the most European of cities, but Cambridge officials hope the move brings a bit more Paris to its side of the Charles. A lawsuit filed last week by the Harvard Square Defense Fund is challenging the policy on Open Meeting Law grounds, but the license applications are proceeding, and The Asgard, the first restaurant to gain state approval, plans to start pouring Tuesday.

In anticipation of its paperwork coming through, Grendel's, which took a fight for a liquor license all the way to the US Supreme Court in the 1980s and now, has doubled its outdoor seats to 32.

Right next door, UpStairs on the Square plans 26 sidewalk seats. Across little Winthrop Street, the hip new OM Restaurant is adding 24 seats outside. In Central Square, Central Kitchen wants 36 sidewalk seats, and The Tavern and Wish is hoping for 30.

Near MIT, the Asgard plans to unveil a 62-seat outdoor dining area, triple the size of the 20-seat one it has had in previous seasons. Brafton Street, near Harvard, now as city approval to serve alcohol on its patio.

"If it's summertime, you want to sit outside," says Elizabeth Lint, executive officer of the Cambridge License Commission, which has been hearing several applications for outdoor liquor service at each meeting. "You're paying for a lovely meal, and you want to have a glass of wine or whatever you choose to accompany it. They do it all over Boston and the South End, when why not here?"



ZARA TZANEV FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Sarah Brem and Joel Sunshine ordered at the Grendel's Den outdoor patio in Harvard Square this month. Restaurants have applied for permission to serve alcohol on city-owned sidewalks.

At a few restaurants that own their outdoor space, the sun already meets the shiraz with no legal difficulty, including The Red House and Harvest in Harvard Square and Oleana near Inman Square. Most restaurants in congested urban areas, though, don't have that luxury; they border a mere patch of city sidewalk. Since liquor licenses restrict service to a business's own premises, a waiter carrying a glass of sauvignon blanc onto the street would be in violation.

After buying the Austin Grill outside Central Square more than four years ago and converting it to the Asgard, owner Bill Goodwin said, "I just couldn't understand why the city and state would prevent people who really need to enjoy the beautiful outdoors from enjoying it with a glass of wine or beer or a cocktail."

When he approached city officials about making a change, they were receptive. A committee of city officials and restaurateurs met for more than six months to address disabled accessibility, city liability, noise and rowdiness, and aesthetics.

The resulting policy follows the model of Boston, which in 2002 began allowing restaurants to lease the sidewalks from the city for the season. "Since then, the patios have taken off," said Dan Pokaski, chairman of the Boston Licensing Board. "It works really

well. We have very few problems with them."

In Cambridge, the city is charging each restaurant \$750 to use the sidewalk for the season. The outdoor expansion cannot violate the cap on the number of seats allowed by a restaurant's liquor license, Lint said. Waiters can serve alcohol only along with food, must stop by 11 p.m., and cannot allow smoking on the patios. The commission is requiring designs that include cordoned-off areas and planters and not "rinky-dink furniture," Lint said.

"The mayor thinks it should be like Paris," she said. "We want a cosmopolitan kind of feel."

The change dovetails with a \$3.5 million renovation project to improve roads and sidewalks and jumpstart the street life in the square, which draws 8 million visitors a year. Winthrop and Palmer streets, for instance, will be transformed into pedestrian malls.

The restrictions in the policy have meant there has been little to no specific opposition at public hearings on the restaurants' applications, Lint said. But objections have come from the Harvard Square Defense Fund, which filed suit last week alleging that the city violated the state's Open Meeting Law by not inviting the public to the planning sessions between city officials and restaurateurs. The fund's vice president, Pebble Gifford, said the group does not op-

pose the general idea, but objects to the policy's nine-month season, March to November.

"We're not anti-patio," Gifford said. "... The lawsuit is happening because none of us were at the table."

Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi says he's "confident the city will prevail." The group was an advisory board and did not include a quorum of members of the License Commission or City Council and therefore wasn't subject to the Open Meeting Law, he said.

As for the nine-month season, he said, "this year in March we had better weather than some of the days in May, so I think the restaurant folks were like, 'We may not do this, but if we end up with a 65-degree week at the end of March, what's the harm if it's well-managed?'"

At Grendel's Den last week, even with every bench in Winthrop Park occupied and a folk singer strumming away, only four of the 10 outdoor tables were occupied at 7 p.m.

Claire Spollen and J.B. Sapienza started to grab a seat there, but went inside when they heard they couldn't drink alcohol. "I just turned in a final paper [at Harvard Extension School], and it would be so nice to sit outside and have a beer," Spollen said.

Joe Yonan can be reached at yanon@globe.com.

Opinion A11

SEAN ROCHE

Is parking too cheap?

What's wrong with this picture?

Four friends drive to Kenmore Square for a Red Sox game. They take a couple of laps around the neighborhood unsuccessfully looking for a \$1-an-hour meter. They give up and park in a \$20 lot.

Thanks to the work of UCLA urban planning professor Donald Shoup, we now know that the low meter rates lead to congestion, unnecessary fuel consumption, and additional pollution. It also allows parking entrepreneurs to make 20 bucks (or more) for the same 120 square feet of asphalt that the city is practically giving away.

In his recent book, "The High Cost of Free Parking," Shoup claims that curbside parking is a valuable resource that cities squander by "renting" for less than market value. The most obvious consequence is the lost revenue. If motorists are willing to pay \$20 to park in a lot for a Red Sox game, why shouldn't the city charge the same amount, or at least something closer to the private rate than \$1 an hour?

This wouldn't just generate more money for the city. When there's cheap parking to be had, spots fill up. But, people, like our Sox fans above, troll the streets hoping to score the elusive spot (and save the \$20 for some Fenway franks). A trolling car consumes gas, emits pollution, and adds to congestion.

Near-free parking is also bad parking. Consider Newbury Street, another place where curbside spaces are chronically scarce. Low meter rates lead to low turnover. Once people — often residents and employees — find spaces, they spend the day feeding meters. It's cheap. Shoppers, who are the most valuable parkers to local businesses, cannot find spaces easily, though they invariably take a few laps looking in vain.

If Newbury Street meter prices were set high enough to produce a 15-percent vacancy rate, the level Shoup recommends, a number of good things would happen. (The proper meter price would only become clear through trial and error.) Turnover would increase, as those needing long-term parking would look elsewhere — or travel by foot or by the T instead. Shoppers willing to pay the higher rate would always be able to park near their destination boutique. A few open spaces on every block would decrease congestion-producing trolling. And there'd be new meter revenue, which could be earmarked for improvements along Newbury Street.

Such a proenvironment policy might seem to come at the expense of business. But what shop owner wouldn't want a new customer parking in front of his store a few times an hour? In places like South Pasadena and Redwood City, Calif., where Shoup's theories have been put to a real-world test, the results have pleased local businesses.

Boston sells itself short in another way: through resident-only parking along streets such as Commonwealth Avenue. For \$30 a year, you can occupy some of the most valuable real estate in the country, if you are lucky enough to find a space. And, you can stay about as long as you'd like. These spaces, too, should be subject to market rates.

Resident parking policies that resulted in a 15-percent vacancy rate along Commonwealth Avenue would have similar benefits as higher meter rates on Newbury Street. But the surprising beneficiaries would be the residents themselves, as they could count on predictable short-term parking near their homes. Fifteen-percent vacancy could be achieved by adding several meters to every block, which could be resident-only meters.

The Kenmore Square-Newbury Street-Commonwealth Avenue triangle makes for a good story because of the seriousness and variety of parking issues in close proximity. But, the parking problems in that area are not unique. Like Fenway, the Garden and many of the major institutions generate the same kind of event-driven parking demand. (Try getting a space near the Children's Museum on a rainy Saturday.) Lots of commercial areas have issues as acute as Newbury Street's. And resident parking cannot meet demand in lots of the city's neighborhoods.

Market-based parking could relieve some of the problems resulting from excess demand for the city's curbside parking — and generate money for neighborhood improvements. Higher meter rates are not a solution, though, for all the traffic and parking issues in Boston, or any other city. There needs to be better provision of off-street parking, more coordinated traffic and parking policies, and enhancement of mass-transit options.

Still, higher meter rates could, by themselves, have a noticeable, immediate effect. The city should give it a shot.

Sean Roche writes about traffic and parking at newtonstreets.blogspot.com.